

Getting Unshredded

Tips for Coming off the Get Shredded Diet

By Dr John Berardi, CSCS

So you want to get shredded, do ya? Like, ridiculously shredded? You know, 3% body fat shredded?

Well, if so, you're in the *wrong* place, bubba.

That's right; this article is about getting *un-shredded* – or, more specifically, it's about transitioning off The Get Shredded Diet.

Now, for those of you who've checked out The Get Shredded Diet, you'll know that this diet was designed specifically to be quite extreme. In that sense, it's a bit of a departure from my relatively sane and moderate baseline nutrition approach found in [Precision Nutrition](#).



You'll also know that the diet was designed to be used fairly infrequently, and, when used, to be used for very short periods of time. In fact, I personally use The Get Shredded Diet ONCE every 104 weeks. And even then, I only stick with it for between 6 and 12 weeks, all depending on how lean I intend to get. Remember, the goal of the program is to help you drop anywhere from 0.5% to 1% body fat each and every week.

So if you haven't checked out The Get Shredded Diet, click here to learn what it's all about. When you do, you'll find out exactly how to structure your nutrition and supplement programs and you'll get a glimpse of the program that myself and my female training partner used to drop a combined 26lbs of body fat in 8 weeks.

And if that's not enough evidence that this plan works – big-time – check out the following two links:

Dave Tate

(Click here to see how strength coaching legend Dave Tate used this plan to get in the 8% body fat range – down from his starting point of 18% body fat)

T-Nation Forum Member MTJMTJ

(Click here to see how forum member dropped 14lbs in 17 days on this plan)

So even though the plan works - and we know it - this article isn't about the plan. It's about the all-important *post-plan* plan. In other words, it's about effectively transitioning off The Get Shredded Diet.

Why Do We Need To Transition?

Far and away, the number one question I've received since the publication of the Get Shredded Diet, is this one:

"Hey JB; The Get Shredded Diet is awesome. But how do I go back to normal eating without blowing up like a freshman chick at an ice cream buffet?"

Why are readers so concerned; and what exactly are they so concerned about?

Well, anyone who's ever been on a calorie and carb restricted diet knows that coming off such diets can be tricky. After all, you can expect the following to occur when using The Get Shredded Diet:

- *A reduction in metabolic rate and sympathetic nervous system output
- *A reduction in thyroid hormone output
- *A reduction in testosterone, IGF-1, and growth hormone concentrations
- *A reduction in body water
- *An exaggerated insulin response to dietary carbohydrates
- *A huge, insatiable appetite

Woa, why is all this bad stuff happening? Here's why:

*Drops in metabolic rate and sympathetic output:

Of course, a reduction in metabolic rate while on The Get Shredded Diet is to be expected as there is a tight relationship between energy intake and energy output.

As I've discussed previously in my New View of Energy Balance article and have expanded upon in my new book The Metabolism Advantage, energy output chases energy intake. What this means is that when we eat more, our metabolic rates increase. And when we eat less, our metabolic rates decrease.

So there's pretty much no way of maintaining metabolic rate, without some sort of drug intervention, while dieting hard. Metabolism chases intake, plain and simple. Get used to it.

*Drops in thyroid hormone output and anabolic hormone concentrations:

Thyroid hormones and reproductive hormones are very sensitive to energy balance. Once energy balance becomes negative (either due to a very large energy expenditure or a very low energy intake), these hormonal

concentrations drop. The drop is especially precipitous, and in proportion to the caloric deficit, when the negative energy balance comes as a result of a decrease in calorie intake.

In fact, if you're looking for a surrogate marker of energy balance, look no further than thyroid hormone concentrations. I often use thyroid concentrations to determine whether my athletes are achieving energy balance.

Once I have a set of baseline measures, I monitor thyroid hormone concentrations. If they drop below a certain threshold, and the athlete is not actively trying to restrict calories, I know the athlete is in too large a deficit and likely needs to eat more food.

***Drops in body water:**

In general, every gram of carbohydrate stored as glycogen is stored along with about 3grams of water. Therefore, as carbs are restricted (and stored glycogen is depleted), fluid will leave the body.

Further, urinary excretion rates are increased with lower carbohydrate diets. This is due to the increase in protein intake as well as the production of ketone bodies. As you might imagine, this increase in urinary excretion forces more water out of the body.

Finally, as The Get Shredded Diet is naturally low in processed food, it's also low in sodium. As sodium can sequester additional water in the body, a reduced sodium diet can lead to body water losses.

Drop your carbs while increasing dietary fat and protein and you'll definitely see water losses due to these mechanisms above.

***Exaggerated Insulin Response:**

Lower carbohydrate diets can lead to short-term insulin insensitivity in the face of higher carbohydrate intakes. Now, that's not such a big deal while still on the lower carb diet. After all, insulin sensitivity doesn't have to be so good when carbs are restricted. But, when you start eating carbs again, this exaggerated insulin response can be a problem.

Oh, it's not so bad for the first day or two of higher carbohydrate intakes. The depleted liver and muscle glycogen stores will greedily gobble up those carbs.

But remember, although the carbs are being gobbled up by the muscles and liver, there's still an exaggerated insulin response. And with high insulin comes a reduction in fat mobilization and oxidation.

So even while the muscles and liver are filling up, there's an anti-lipolytic effect. And once those glycogen stores fill up, if the carbs aren't introduced slowly and the insulin controlled, fat gain can be rapid.

***A Huge Appetite**

Just as energy output chases intake, the body has mechanisms in place to stimulate intake when output predominates.

As the entire point of The Get Shredded Diet is to create a mismatch between energy input and output (with output being greater than input), you should expect to be hungry – very hungry.

Now, at this point, you might be wondering why anyone would follow The Get Shredded Diet – especially if all this nasty stuff occurs.

Uh, duh, reality check. People follow The Get Shredded Diet because it causes fat to *fly off the body!*

Sure, all of the adaptations discussed above are VERY undesirable in the long-term. However, in the short-term, these are all necessary and relatively benign consequences associated with dropping your body fat into the low single digit range.

Remember, the important thing here is NOT to try to prevent these things from happening – if you want to be shredded, you can't. The important thing is to manage them – and this can be done through proper nutrient selection and nutritional supplement use (both discussed in the original article). And, in addition to managing these things while *on* the diet, you also have to respect these changes when transitioning *off* the diet.

Fail to respect these physiological changes when coming off The Get Shredded Diet and you can expect:

***A huge rebound in body water**

Some dieters have gained as much as 15lbs in a week due to improperly transitioning from calorie and carb restricted diets. While some of this is muscle glycogen, most of it is water. And there's nothing quite as frustrating as blowing up like the Michelin Man only 7 short days after being in the best shape of your life.

***Very poor carbohydrate tolerance**

The reintroduction of a high carbohydrate intake immediately after an energy and carbohydrate restricted diet can cause a series of problems.

First, you'll likely have giant swings in blood sugar, due to the exaggerated insulin response; this leading to you feeling sluggish and drowsy most of the time. Second, within a week or two, once your glycogen stores are filled up, you'll likely start packing away fat quickly;

again due to the high insulin concentrations. Third, you'll likely have some GI distress; this is due to digestive system having a hard time dealing with the new-found carbohydrates. And fourth, your appetite will be largely unmanageable; this is due to the blood sugar swings and insulin response.

So remember, improper transitional dieting can not only lead to discomfort, it can also lead to rapid fat regain. And since you don't want to negate the results of your hard work during the previous 6-12 weeks, it's time to learn how to transition off The Get Shredded Diet.

Top Tips for the Transition

At this point, let's talk about how to properly transition off The Get Shredded Diet. The following 8 tips are all strategies that I've found to be supremely useful in avoiding post-diet water and fat rebound.

Tip #1 – Have a 6-12 Week Plan

Just like you had a 6-12 week plan in following The Get Shredded Diet, you'll need a 6-12 week plan coming off The Get Shredded Diet. Sure, it's easy to think – hey, my diet's over – thank god – now I don't have to be so regimented. Well...not so fast. Although I'm not asking you to be as strict as you were during The Get Shredded Diet, you will have to have a plan for coming off the diet. So don't just eat whatever you feel like when you feel like it. If you do, you're doomed.

With a suppressed metabolism and an insatiable appetite, feeding *ad libitum* (literally translated as “at one's pleasure” and practically translated as “without a plan”) will quickly return your body to your pre-diet body fat percentage – even without going hog wild. So make sure you take a good 6-12 weeks to follow the strategies below.

Tip #2 – Keep the Carbs Low

As discussed above, after your time on The Get Shredded Diet, your body's ability to handle carbohydrates will be diminished. Sure, for a day or two, it'll be fine – perhaps even enhanced (as seen with cyclic diets). But once the glycogen is restored, if you keep the carbs up, you'll literally be able to hear yourself getting fatter.

So you'll need to keep your carbs low for the first few weeks while you progressive ramp up your calories. Don't worry, though, you'll get to cycle your carbs throughout. I'll outline your calorie and carb strategies below. But for now, let me simply repeat myself – don't go right back to a high carb diet after The Get Shredded Diet. If you do, you'll be sorry.

Tip #3 – Slowly Ramp up the Calories

As I'll discuss below, you'll be cycling your carbs. However, for the first few weeks you'll have more of the lower carb days than you'll have of the higher carb days. Therefore let's discuss what to do on the lower carb days.

Once you end The Get Shredded Diet, begin to bump your calories up by adding an extra meal per day. You may recall that I recommended 4 food meals and 4 BCAA/Creatine drinks. Now, when coming off the diet, I want you to eliminate 2 BCAA/Creatine drinks (the ones taken outside of the workout window) and add another meal to your daily intake. This meal should be similar to your typical Get Shredded meals – lean protein, good fats, and veggies. Do this for the first three weeks. Then, for weeks 4 through 6, increase the number of calories you're eating per meal by about 100kcal. Do the same again for weeks 7 through 9.

Here's an example of how a 200lb male would alter his meal schedule and calorie intake:

Last Week of Get Shredded – (About 2000kcal/day)

4 meals (500kcal each) + 4 BCAA/Creatine drinks (during workouts)

1st – 3rd Weeks off Get Shredded – (Lower Carb Days; about 2500kcal/day)

5 meals (500kcal each) + 2 BCAA Creatine drinks (during workouts)

4th – 6th Weeks off Get Shredded – (Lower Carb Days; about 3000kcal/day)

5 meals (600kcal each) + 2 BCAA Creatine drinks (during workouts)

7th – 9th Weeks off Get Shredded – (Lower Carb Days; about 3500kcal/day)

5 meals (700kcal each) + 2 BCAA Creatine drinks (during workouts)

And here's what it might look like for a 100lb woman:

Last Week of Get Shredded – (About 1000kcal/day)

4 meals (250kcal each) + 4 BCAA/Creatine drinks (during workouts)

1st – 3rd Weeks off Get Shredded – (Lower Carb Days; about 1250kcal/day)

5 meals (250kcal each) + 2 BCAA Creatine drinks (during workouts)

4th – 6th Weeks off Get Shredded – (Lower Carb Days; about 1750kcal/day)

5 meals (350kcal each) + 2 BCAA Creatine drinks (during workouts)

7th – 9th Weeks off Get Shredded – (Lower Carb Days; about 2250kcal/day)

5 meals (450kcal each) + 2 BCAA Creatine drinks (during workouts)

Of course, the 100kcal per meal recommendation is just a ball-park figure. Don't get out the abacus to make these calculations; it's a real drag calculating every meal down to the smallest kcal. And you're now off your diet so you shouldn't have to!

To make it easy on yourself, simply add a little food to each meal. If you find you're ramping it up too quickly (too much weight/fat gain), take a bit of food out. And if you're not ramping it up fast enough (continued weight loss), put a bit more in. Really folks, it's that easy.

Oh, and after week 9, you're on your own – so do yourself a favor and pick up [Precision Nutrition](#). It really does make proper eating a lifestyle that you can stick to for 365 days a year.

Tip #4 – Cycle the Carbs

As I mentioned above, when transitioning off a calorie and carb restricted diet, you need to cycle your carbs back into your diet. Throwing them back in all at once is a mistake. So here's how I want you reintroducing them.

1st – 3rd Weeks off Get Shredded

2 higher carb days; spread 3-4 days apart

4th – 6th Weeks off Get Shredded

3 higher carb days; spread 2-3 days apart

7th and 9th Weeks off Get Shredded

4 higher carb days; spread 1-2 days apart

And what should you do at the end of these 9 weeks? Get back to your normal eating patterns, that's what.

But before moving on to the next tip, I think it's important to note that these higher carb days aren't re-feeds or cheat days. They're simply days where you can reintroduce some carbohydrate into your diet – these carbs to come ON TOP OF the calories determined above.

For example, if you're a 200lb male following the weeks 4-6 recommendations above (3000kcal/day), simply add some high quality (fibrous, low GI) carbs to your daily meals WITHOUT subtracting them from your 3000kcal daily total. That's right; add some oats and berries to breakfast, some whole grain wraps at lunch, some Surge during training, and some whole grain pasta after training. Your calorie total might end up in the 3500-4000 range on these days – and that's ok since you'll only be adding these carbs in a few days per week.

By the way, you're now cycling both your carbs and your calories. Cool, eh?

Ok – so what about exercise? Good question... You can certainly schedule your higher carb days on training days. This type of scheduling may lead to better lean gains as you come off the diet. Either way, it will certainly lead to better pumps in the gym.

Of course, I'd be remiss if I didn't point out that you should make sure that the bulk of your daily carb intake on these days comes during and within the 3 hours after exercise. During the rest of the day, keep your carbs a bit lower and make sure they come from foods that are high in fiber and contain a low glycemic index.

For more great information on year-round carb cycling, check out Christian Thibaudeau's Carb Cycling Codex.

Tip #5 – Taper off the Supplements

As you gradually increase your calorie intake as well as micronutrient intake, you can begin to taper off your Get Shredded supplements. Here's how:

***BCAA+Creatine**

As discussed above, begin by removing 2 daily BCAA/Creatine drinks. Then, on your low carb days, drink your 2 remaining BCAA/Creatine drinks during and after training. And on your higher carb days, get back to using Surge with creatine during and after your training sessions.

***greens+**

Depending on the # of fruits and veggies you add back in, greens+ will either stay or go during your first week off The Get Shredded Diet. If you're ingesting 12-15 servings of fruits and veggies/day, it can go. If you're falling short of the fruit and veggie goal, it should probably stay until you get that together.

***Multi-Vitamin and ZMA**

Once calorie intake is back to normal, I typically drop the multi-vitamins and ZMA. When I'm at maintenance intake or above, I'm confident that my micronutrient needs are met by my food choices. And since I don't have any problems with sleep once my calories are back in line, I feel comfortable dropping the multi and the ZMA.

***Fish oil**

Do you really need to ask? This, of course, stays.

***Hot Rox and Abs+**

During the first week off The Get Shredded Diet, I begin to taper off the Hot Rox and/or Abs+ (whichever I'm on at the end of the diet).

I usually cut my dose down by 1/3 per week for the next 3 weeks. For example, if I'm using 3 capsules 3x per day, I'll drop down to 2 capsules 3x per day, then 1 capsule 3x per day, then none.

***Power Drive**

Once you're off The Get Shredded Diet, you can drop the Power Drive – if you find that your CNS recovery is good. Personally, I keep taking 1 serving per day even after the diet as I definitely notice a difference when taking it year-round. However, not everyone needs to keep it in there, so choose based on your own personal response.

Tip #6 – Add Cardio as Necessary

Although I do very little cardio DURING The Get Shredded Diet, I usually add some in during my taper off the diet. I do this in order to better manage my energy balance and to blow out any extra water weight I'm holding from the re-introduction of carbs (and sodium) to my diet.

You see, with a depressed metabolic rate (a function of the low energy intake), the removal of supplements designed to mobilize and oxidize fat, and a gradually increasing calorie and carb intake, it's often difficult to control energy balance without the inclusion of some additional exercise. And, with the addition of the carbs and sodium, it's difficult to manage water weight.

So, in order to get control of both water and energy balance, you may need to add some low intensity cardio work (outdoors - bike rides, walking, rollerblading; indoors – treadmill walking, bike work, elliptical climbing, rowing) during the first few weeks post-diet. Just make sure you're monitoring your body and it'll let you know if it needs the extra exercise or not.

Tip #7 – Exercise Caution and Discipline

This tip has likely been evident in the previous 6 tips above but it's worth stating explicitly here. As you come off the Get Shredded Diet, you'll want to throw caution to the wind and dive head-first into a big bin of Krispy Kremes. And once you've done that, you'll want another vat. And another...and so on.

Trust me, I know. The day after my first bodybuilding show I wanted nothing more than a bowl of cereal for breakfast. Well that bowl became a box. And that box, another. 3 boxes of cereal and 1 gallon of milk later, I was laying on the floor in a carb-induced coma.

The weird part is that I wanted to stop at 1 bowl. Then at 1 box. But I couldn't. I was really hungry and didn't have a plan. And once I started eating and the insulin kicked up, I couldn't stop thinking about the next bowl. I was literally obsessed with eating more cereal. Heck, after the 3rd box, I almost drove to the store for more. If I could have moved, I would have.

Sure, laugh all you want, but I'm not alone. Just look at the diet statistics – they tell us that between 85 and 95% of those who lose weight on a diet, gain it all back – and then some. I no longer wonder why. If their diet was strict and they lost a good percentage of their body weight, it's likely that they've fallen victim to the cereal box obsession above.

So, the moral of this story is this – coming off an extreme diet can actually be more mentally demanding than being on the diet. When you're on the diet, it's easy to just do what you're supposed to do. But when you're "off" the justification mechanisms kick in and tell you it's alright to eat the whole box – and then another. Truly, it takes proper planning, carb and calorie cycling, and some serious discipline to do it right.

Tip #8 – Resume Normal Eating

The last tip I've got for you is more of a shameless [Precision Nutrition](#) plug than anything.

You see, eventually you're going to have to resume normal eating. And if you use my transitional approach above, you'll have to start this "normalcy" about 9-10 weeks after ceasing your tenure in Get Shredded land. Yet, for most people interested in having a lean, muscular body, "normal" eating simply isn't good enough. For most people, their "normal" eating habits are in need of a pretty dramatic overhaul. Sure, they can diet just fine. But it's those non-diet periods that confound them.

So, if you're one of those people that just knows your "normal" nutritional habits could use a bit of a tune up, jump in there and pick up a copy of [Precision Nutrition](#). I'm confident that it'll help you learn how to eat right once and for all – for life.

Staying Shredded

Ok, with these tips handy, your transition from The Get Shredded Diet should be a smooth one. No, I won't say an easy one as this transition requires a ton of restraint and discipline. However, if you can hang in there, can exercise caution and discipline, and can follow the steps above, you'll end up preventing the rebound effect. And not only will you prevent the rapid rebound fat gain, you'll likely pack on a few pounds of lean body mass while maintaining a very respectable level of leanness.

Good luck!

About The Author

Dr. John Berardi, CSCS, is a world renowned author, speaker, and consultant to a number of elite athletic programs. For more information about Dr. Berardi and his nutrition programs for both athletes or recreational exercisers, check out www.precisionnutrition.com.