

# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO PHOTOSHOOT PREP

BY  
**CHRISTOPHER  
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## CONTRIBUTORS

- NUTRITION AND PREPERATION  
STRATAGIES BY THE UK'S TOP  
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GENERAL SHOOT TIPS BY THE  
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## "HOW DO I GET IN PEAK PHOTOSHOOT SHAPE?"

*- This is the question I get asked most as a professional fitness photographer working with some of the world's top models and athletes.*

People want to carve that ultimate physique to get in front of the camera or compete on the bodybuilding stage.

Your dieting and training can get you to the cusp of physical perfection – but getting final week preparations correct can really take your body to greatness.

These vital last few days can make or break great physiques.

This is why I have created The Ultimate Photoshoot Prep Guide

It brings together years of experience working with the world's best athletes, physique coaches and nutritionists shooting for publications like Muscle & Fitness and FLEX magazine.

It is a bible for anyone who wants to take their body to the next level.

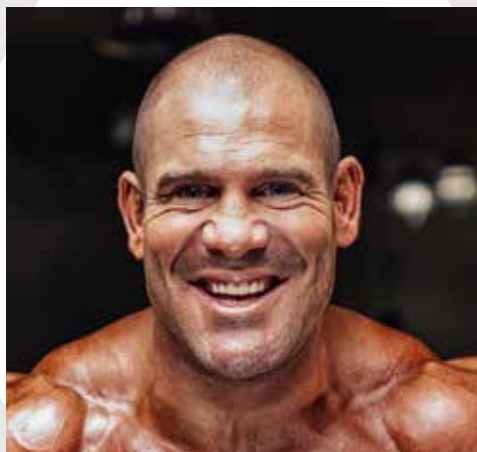
Professional fitness industry tanning expert Louise Beard-Ritsma shares her knowledge of skin preparation and effective tanning to ensure your physique gets the perfect finishing touch.



Nutrition expert Phil Learney looks at the science of fat loss and carbohydrate manipulation and how to ensure your final week is flawless.



IFBB Pro bodybuilder Anth Bales talks about diet and how water and salt can be manipulated to give you the ultimate shredded condition.



Leading body transformation coach Mark Coles reveals the tricks to 'carb up' effectively so your muscles look full but your body is dry, cut and ultra-lean.



Ryan Terry, IFBB Men's Physique Pro and fitness model, shares his experience of final week preparations for both photoshoots and the pro stage with tips on depleting, carb loading and getting ripped.



Photographer Christopher Bailey explains how to prepare for your photoshoot, what to expect on the day and how you can get those fantastic shots that really showcase your hard work.



IFBB Bikini Fitness Pro Nina Ross reveals the perfect prep plan for the bikini stage and avoiding the mistakes that can ruin a championship-winning physique.



**Christopher Bailey – Professional fitness photographer**

I shoot with pro fitness athletes and models but I also shoot with a lot of first-timers as well. I photograph people who see a shoot as the culmination of their body transformation goal as well as post-competition shoots.

With first timers they can be really nervous but I think as long as the photographer is confident in what they are doing, they have a good reputation and a good portfolio behind them then you don't have a lot to worry about.

The biggest worry for people is thinking they're going to have to come up with all the poses themselves which isn't true at all if you're with a well-established fitness photographer.

They are there to guide you. They do it pretty much every day so they will pick out exercises to do or, if it's a studio shoot, they will tell you exactly how to pose.

People often bring motivational pictures they've found and as a photographer I'm more than happy to replicate that look.

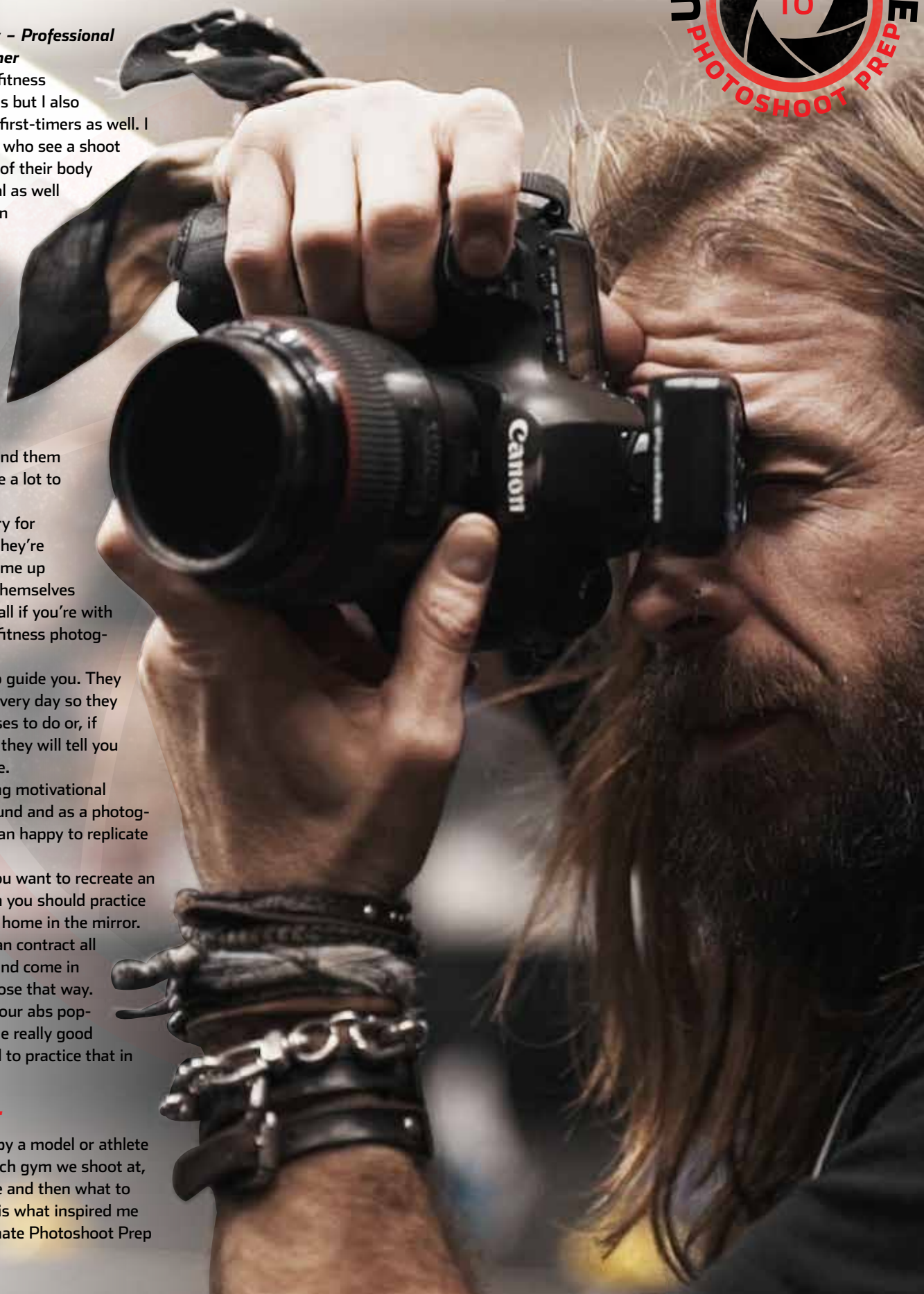
I do suggest if you want to recreate an image you like then you should practice the look or pose at home in the mirror.

Make sure you can contract all the right muscles and come in knowing you can pose that way.

So, if you want your abs popping and want some really good abs shots you need to practice that in the mirror.

## THE SHOOT

Once I am booked by a model or athlete we will discuss which gym we shoot at, what date and time and then what to bring along – this is what inspired me to create The Ultimate Photoshoot Prep





Guide.

I want people to have a good idea of what to expect on a shoot with any fitness photographer – not just myself.

I am very relaxed with clients ahead of a shoot.

While I'm setting up my lights and the model is getting a pump on or eating we sit about and have a laugh and find out what we're expecting to get out of the shoot. It helps build a good atmosphere to get the best shots.

If it's a personal shoot and you've just done a competition, make sure your mind is in the right place, you're excited about the shoot and you're 100% into it.

Coming into the shoot with an ego or bad attitude will show through in the pictures.

If you're not responding well with the photographer or you're not easy-going then it won't be an easy day for anyone.

Keep an open mind, so if the photographer

has any ideas or you have any ideas you can work with them.

Remember, it should be a fun experience.

I will break the shoot down between ideas I have got and ideas the client has got.

We will just run around the gym and shoot them.

If full creative direction has been left to me, depending on what gym we're shooting in, I will have shot there before so I know what works or I will get ideas from the gym environment.

We move from machine to machine and spend a lot of time in the free weights section where you can get some brilliant shots.

Cable shots are very popular and girls like a lot of leg shots, like squats, to show off their glutes.

## THE PERFECT TAN

If you have booked a photoshoot I imagine your body will be in peak condition, but there are a few essentials to consider to complete your look and will make your images really shine.

The tan is a massive part of any physique shoot, the same as it is on the bodybuilding stage.

You've got bright white lights shining on you which will blow out your skin tones – so don't turn up to a shoot without a tan.

The reason is that if you've got a nice dark tan, the flashes photographers use will bring shadows out and accent your best features.

If you've been round for a spray tan in a beauty salon it's not good enough – you really do need to go and see a professional fitness tanner.

If you've spent a long time training and dieting down and a lot of money investing in a photoshoot, why get a substandard tan that could ruin your look?

A professional tanner will give you advice on preparing for a shoot, how to prep your body and when to get the tan done.

## WHAT TO WEAR

This comes down to personal preference. Some people go out and spend a fortune on Gasp or Better Bodies clothing which can be quite expensive, but it is good gym wear.

A favourite of mine for a shoot, which I suggest to a lot of people, is Jordan basketball shorts for the guys.

I think they work really well if you're a bodybuilder or a physique athlete. If you want to get those classic leg shots then I suggest bringing some hot pants-type shorts too.

You should come prepared for anything. You need three or four different outfit changes with different colours.

It can come down to the gym colour scheme – certain colours will work really well with them, so I find it's best to wear neutral colours like black, white, grey or red.

When we're shooting upper body stuff with the training-style shots, I do recommend either Gasp or a pair of loose, baggy basketball shorts. Then when the leg shots come out, put a pair of hot pants on. Usually for those shots we will stick a vest on too, so you've still got arms out on show, but it gives you that bit more relaxation around the stomach area.

This is so you're not having to concentrate too hard on your abs during leg shots, which can be quite difficult.

Better Bodies make really nice clothing for girls. If you're having a fitness shoot you're there to show off your body, but find something you're comfortable in first of all – especially if you're shooting in a gym. If you're in a studio you can go a bit more risqué.

Hot pants are the common thing along with sports bras or vest tops. If the girls have

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GILLES CROFTA



competed, they will bring their bikinis to get a couple of shots at the end, if there's a private space or studio available.

It comes down to what you're most comfortable in and what you want to show off.

## GETTING A PUMP ON

Guys on their first shoot often say they want a good half an hour to train to get a pump on. That is a bad idea.

With the training-style shots I do you're pretty much working out anyway and holding weights for long periods.

So I think the most you need is a five or 10-minute pump-up with light weights to get the blood flowing through the system.

This means just working over the whole body with some light shoulders, lateral raises, shoulder press, curls and a few squats.

I've been on shoots before where people get over-excited and they have pretty much gone into a full workout to get a pump and completely blown out. Their body just swells out because they've gone in too hard.

Most guys do look softer and softer as it goes on, but the shoot should probably only last between an hour to an hour and a half.

## THE RIGHT LOCATION

I like big gyms with a lot of space and head room. When you're picking your shoot gym, think about the photographer and have in

mind they will have a lot of lights so they will need space to get the right shadows.

For a good physique shot there is a lot of down lighting which means the lights need to be above the subject, so gyms with low ceilings don't work at all.

You want a gym with a good environment. You don't want to be in an environment where you feel uncomfortable or where the gym owners are not really happy about it.

If you get a bad atmosphere and I think that impacts overall on the shots.

Many gyms are quite accommodating nowadays because of the publicity it brings to the gym. If you're shooting with me there's a chance it might get in a magazine.

## SHOOT FOOD

On a photoshoot it can be hard to judge what to eat, and when. Just bring little nibbles like rice cakes.

If it's a personal shoot and you know what exact time you're shooting then people bring things to get their sugars running and carbs into the body just before they get a pump up.

The most common pre-shoot food is rice cakes with honey or with peanut butter and jam. People sometimes take a pre-workout before a shoot to get a pump on and come in a bit more vascular.

People also turn up with bags of sweets like Haribo for the simple sugars.

## THINGS TO AVOID

If you're shooting the day after a competition people will have a cheat meal when they have been on stage, which can often benefit their physique.

Eating a pizza, burger or doughnuts on the night will get them coming in a bit sharper and fuller for the photoshoot. It can be beneficial to enjoy yourself and have a little cheat, but don't go overboard. Just have a decent meal and a dessert. Don't go crazy because some people 'water over' a lot quicker than others.

You might really let yourself down by going too far with the cheat meal.

Oil is good on photoshoots because it brings out the lights a lot more and brings out your body.

Most people bring Vaseline, baby oil or coconut oil which works well because it's not too greasy and gives a nice glow.

But beware of putting oil on until you're at the gym because it can smudge and ruin your photos.

The best thing to do is wait until you're actually at the shoot where I can do little patch tests on your body to see if the oil is going to react with the tan.

## MY PREP

I did an eight-week prep last year spurred on by photographer Giles Crofta and Mark Coles, who is one of the country's top prep coaches.

I saw it as a challenge for myself and I was very lucky to have people like Mark willing to offer their expertise.

I stuck to Mark's prep 100% and checked in with him once a week. I was weighed in and had my body fat checked weekly so adjustments could be made to my diet.

I've trained hard and eaten reasonably clean for most of my life, so I didn't find it too bad.

## CONTRIBUTORS

### NUTRITION AND PREPERATION STRATAGIES BY THE UK'S TOP PREP COACHES

- PHIL LEARNEY // [PHILLEARNERY.COM](http://PHILLEARNERY.COM)
- MARK COLES // [M10FITNESS.CO.UK](http://M10FITNESS.CO.UK)
- ANTH BAILES // [MAXXMUSCLE-GYM.COM](http://MAXXMUSCLE-GYM.COM)

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- RYAN TERRY // [RYANTERRY.CO.UK](http://RYANTERRY.CO.UK)
- NINA ROSS // [NINASSECRET.CO.UK](http://NINASSECRET.CO.UK)



**BAILEY**



GILLES CROFTA





**Phil Learney - Britain's leading expert on strength, conditioning and fat loss**

The magic question for fat loss experts is 'how long is this going to take?'

But it's almost a 'how long's a piece of string' scenario.

Some people need 20 weeks and other people might need 15. Some people might only need three to four weeks.

But the problem there is they put themselves on a standard 12-week diet when they don't need to.

When a coach is assessing someone's condition they don't look at their condition and then give them a diet timeline, they give them a timeline and then look at their condition afterwards.

This generalisation of dietary periods is a bizarre thing.

They will say 'start a 12-week diet' but you've got people at 15% body fat and people at 20%. Their end product is obviously going to be different.

They are all capable of stepping on stage – but some of them are going to be three and four weeks out.

They are the ones that will blame fluid retention or whatever when all they had to do was diet for an extra few weeks.

Look at condition first and then assess how long they need to diet for.



At the start you have to decide how long it will take to get in stage or shoot condition and then work backwards from that.

You don't work forward from it.

## CARB SCIENCE

What happens when you start to get leaner is your body fat goes down so your oestrogen goes down too.

As body fat goes down you dry out anyway. Because as fat and oestrogen goes down you will hold less water.

This is why people start to look grainy and conditioned. You can start to see it below 10% body fat – but there's some inter-personal variation there. So some people it could be as high as 13% or 14% or as low as 5% or 6%.

Carbing up makes sense. Carb loading isn't deplete and then trying to jam in as many carbs as you can over a 48 hour period.

It depends on how much muscle someone

is carrying. So, the more muscle someone carries, and the leaner they are, then the quicker the glucose uptake into cells is going to be.

Also, because insulin is going to function better, the disposal of glucose is going to be quicker so the quicker they are going to get rid of glucose (glycogen) from their cells.

It's what we call 'glucose clearance' – so the leaner someone is, the faster they clear glucose, but the quicker they up-take it. The bottom line is: the leaner someone gets, the more carbs they can tolerate.

Therefore, what should be happening if someone has reached a certain level of leanness is the amount of carbs they can have should be exponentially going up – not going down.

But what people end up doing is dieting on low carbs – because low carbs gets them lean. But low carbs won't bring the conditioning. They've got to bring the carbs back into



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the diet to get the conditioning.

Carbs are the things that fill the muscles out, but without the muscle bellies being full the muscle will look flat.

The key is the period of time before that last week of prep because you've got to be able to bring in condition which will come down to your body fat.

### FINAL WEEK CARBS

Carbing up is relative to body mass. I have an athlete and every time we carb him up we manipulate the amount of carbs he is taking in to see what is a good amount to get full, what is too much and what is not enough.

We have been periodically carbing him up every third or fourth week. So I know when it comes to competition day how much he needs.

It's trial and error. You don't want someone rolling up to a photoshoot having never carbed up before because you don't know how the body will respond.

Carb re-feeds are important throughout to help boost the metabolism, play with leptin and help with insulin sensitivity.

But it's going to vary between people. So you need to trial these things out to know what it will give you.

People often change the type of carbs they use in the last three days before shoot. It's not the wisest thing if you've never had that

particular carb. So always use something that your body is familiar with.

Stick to the foods your body knows - don't experiment. It doesn't make sense.

Having done three or four carb re-feeds during the prep, you will have a clearer picture of the amounts required for a pre-shoot carb up to fill up the muscles without 'spilling over'.

People end up spilling over because they wait until the last 48 hours and they try to jam in as many carbs in that period as possible. That's just stupid.

I will carb my athletes about five or six days out. They will use a fairly low amount nice and gradually and that allows me to have a bit of clearance so I can observe their conditioning better.

I'm not stressing two days out thinking 'I've got to get 2,000g of carbs in here.' Because at what point in the whole prep have they had to eat that amount of carbs in that short space of time? Of course they're going to get bloated.

### PHOTOSHOOT CARB PLAN

If you're shooting on the Saturday, then on Monday and Tuesday you should start to carb up with a small amount. I would be going by 2-3g per kg of bodyweight. But that could range between 2g and 5g.

I've seen people who can carb up on 5g per kg of bodyweight a day for three to four days. You're talking 2,000g of carbs there.

But there's other guys on 500g-600g of carbs over that period and it is ample for them.

People want an exact answer but it's not an exact science - it's different from person to person.

Muscle glycogen levels will be low anyway because you will have been dieting down on low carbs.

Monday through to Thursday you just add carbs and observe, add carbs and observe and then adjust accordingly.

You're checking to see if the muscle bellies are looking full or if they are looking a bit soft. If they do soften up then maybe you've gone too hard on the carbs (or the person might just not be lean enough).

For every 1g of carbs you will put 5g of weight on. That's the water. You need fluid taking into the cells.

So, by Friday you've got a spare day where you can push the carbs higher or take them down because you've got feedback.

You can see if you should put more in, or if they've had a little too many and they're a bit soft so it gives you time to let them clear.

In the days before the shoot you will use slower acting carbs, but on the day of the shoot you will use faster acting carbs.

So that's why a lot of bodybuilders will eat rice cakes instead of potatoes on the day - because they're lighter, faster acting and are dry as opposed to wet so you won't get bloating.



## FINAL DAY

You're doing exactly the same things you have been doing throughout.

If you feel you need to introduce some more carbs on the day of the shoot you can introduce some fast-acting ones.

If you decide on the morning that the athlete needs another 100g-200g of carbs you want something relatively quick.

The problem there is you've got a shoot in five hours and you've got to get some carbs in their body.

Your meals on the day will be determined by whether you need carbs in them or whether you don't.

You will probably have a lean protein, your fats will probably be baseline and then everything will be built around them.

Some people will respond better to fats than carbs and the reverse is true for other people. Some people might be only on 400g of carbs so the rest of their calories have to come from another source – fats.

## JUNK MEALS

To use this technique you have to be holding some ridiculous condition for this to have any benefit.

They call it 'crap loading'. A big boost in sodium from this food helps to pull all the remaining fluid into the cells.

So any residual water still under the surface of the skin gets dragged into the cells. You can't put water into the cells unless you have got electrolytes.

Bodybuilders will have a lot of food that is very low in sodium over the last few weeks of the diet, so what happens on the day is their muscle bellies are very flat because the body is not pulling fluid into the cells.

When you have a big pizza or McDonald's, the salt content is so high that your body is flooded with sodium. So your body drags all the fluid into the cells.

It can be a very hit and miss thing – some people it can work wonders for, other people can react terribly to it.

It's for people who are absolutely shredded to help them get sodium in their system and get them to fill out. But it is trial and error with the human body.

For someone who is doing a photoshoot and not getting into the condition of a pro-bodybuilder in stage condition, I would not risk this.

The main thing is stick to the plan. If what you have been doing throughout your prep has been working, then chances are it will carry on working. If you are leaning up then what you want to happen will happen.

## WATER MANIPULATION

You can either chose to use it or not – it all depends on the person's intra and extra cellular fluid levels and how they react to water.

Bodybuilders won't get things right first time – if they do, it's luck.

It all depends on how lean someone is really. When you look at genetic variability, people will obviously have different levels of

testosterone but there is also variability in the amount of intra- and extra-cellular fluid people are going to hold.

There's a huge amount of things that will factor in with that such as oestrogen levels.

So if someone's got higher oestrogen levels they will hold more extra cellular fluid.

Oestrogen and progesterone act against each other – one is a diuretic and one makes you retain water.

With women at certain times of the month their oestrogen levels are higher, therefore they retain more water. That's why their weight goes up and their physiques look softer.

People who will get the most success are the people that are carrying a decent amount of muscle mass and good muscular conditioning – so their body fat has got to be low.

Dropping fluid for someone whose body fat is above 10% is pointless – all that will happen is their weight will go down and they won't physically look much different.

Unless someone has got the conditioning, and they're carrying a certain amount of mass, then doing a water load and deplete before a photoshoot is kind of pointless.

You need to bring yourself in and if those key things aren't where they're supposed to be, then you probably need to extend the photoshoot deadline.

## AVOID

Don't change anything dramatic – whether it's training, eating or water.

If you're training for 12 weeks and every day you get leaner, all you have to do is just do that for longer.

People get to a point and think they have got to change a load of things and that's when it goes wrong.

People drop water, they drop salt, they change their training around, they start going into saunas – they are desperation attempts.

Basically the person isn't lean enough the vast majority of the time so they panic and do something drastic.

It's the worst thing you can do when you know every day you have consistently got leaner.







**Mark Coles - Britain's leading body transformation coach**

As a body transformation coach I have worked with hundreds of clients training for photoshoots and physique athletes preparing for a competition.

The biggest problem I see is that people end up looking like drowned rats close to shoot time because they are too depleted.

So I want to look at how you can come into a shoot or show looking full and ultra-lean.

**Training**

The key is to slowly increase your training intensity and volume as your preparation goes along.

This means increase how often you train rather than just lowering your calories from the outset.

You want to keep your muscles as full and as fed as possible during training – so increase the frequency and intensity of your training first and don't immediately drop your calories.

Create a calorie deficit by increasing your sessions – so you can split your leg session into a morning quad session and an evening hamstring session. You could add an extra afternoon chest session after a morning back session.

When you can't, or don't want to add more sessions to your weekly plan then you can start manipulating your calories.







struggle to lose any more body fat.

They don't need more training or less food – they need an influx of calories.

This shows that you need a refeed day where you add in excess carbs. The amount of carbs and calories you need over and above your programmed numbers is all relative.

It could be anywhere between 1000 to 4000 calories.

So for example if you need 3,500 calories a day normally, but you are dieting at 2,500, you could add in another 1000 calories and it will increase your metabolic hormones. This will stimulate your metabolism and increase your fat loss again.

I would say 1000-2000 calories would be a decent refeed for a woman and anywhere from 2000 to 4000 calories for a man – when depleted (Remember that 200g of carbs like sweet potato amounts to 800 calories).

It all depends how long you have been calorie depleted.

A refeed or a cheat meal is the best way to stabilise your weight if you find your weight is dropping too much.

Personally, I will put on 3kg after a big cheat meal but within 24 hours I find that that a large percentage of the gain will actu-

## CALORIES

Don't stress your adrenal system by dropping your calories too early on into your preparation – keep your body, adrenal system and muscles well fuelled.

You should be growing into a shoot or show – not wasting away from a training volume that is too high while living off a diet where the carbs and calories are too low.

If you're 12 weeks out and you drop your calories you will not be able to train hard enough, you will stress your adrenal system and you will end up losing muscle.

Keeping a close eye on weight and body fat day-to-day and week-to-week is important.

If you are around 9% or 10% body fat six weeks out you can easily lose 1% fat per week.

If you're at that body fat percentage 12 weeks out then you don't need to diet from the outset. It will not take 12 weeks to get lean.

People underestimate how quickly the body will get into shape.

Don't be hard on yourself from the off. First increase training work volume, intensity and the amount of sessions which should chip away fat – then later you can boost the fat loss process by dropping your calories incrementally.

The actual point where you start 'dieting' is relative to where your body composition is right now.

## REFEED DAYS

If you are really tired, you're losing muscle tissue or your muscles look flat, or you're not recovering well from your workouts, then this is a sign you're over-dieting.

All your thyroid and metabolic hormones get down-regulated. These are your hunger and satiety hormones and they require food to increase your metabolism.

When this happens people will find they





ally come off. This shows that your metabolism is firing.

If it takes several days for that cheat meal weight to come off, then it's probably the case that the refeed or cheat was not needed so early on.

If your muscles are still flat after a refeed day then have another refeed with 50% added on.

A strategic refeed will fill up the glycogen levels in your muscle. The whole point of putting more calories in is to slow down any dramatic weight loss, or to stimulate your metabolism to kick start stalled fat loss.

When using a strategic refeed it is important to track your weight before, immediately after and then 24 hours later to see how your bodyweight has reacted. See how long it takes to return to your original weight.

## DEPLETING

You've trained your ass off and you've dieted right down – your shoot or show is just a week away. It is time to start depleting.

This is when you squeeze every last drop of glycogen out of your muscles ready for a massive carb load which will make you look thick and full.

You don't have to deplete yourself on zero carbs. The magic number is 50% of your highest daily carb intake. So, if you've dieted down and you're on 200g of carbs per day – then half that to 100g per day when depleting.

But if you're still carrying a fair amount of fat then don't deplete and load – it will make your muscles soft. You really need to be lean enough to warrant it.

So, if your show is on the Saturday you





would want to begin depleting on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

During your three-day depletion with your low carbs you need to train to squeeze the glycogen out of your muscles.

A key thing to remember is that you want maximum contraction to get maximum glycogen depletion. You should not be training to damage your muscle tissue – so no slow reps, drop sets or rest pauses – these cause damage and inflammation.

To get the best results you should be getting the maximum contraction on every movement – so on every rep really squeeze the muscle at the top whether it's a bicep curl or a cable row.

Imagine you're squeezing an orange on each rep.

Hit your legs on your first depletion day because they often take longer to recover than your upper body (you don't want inflamed legs come show day). If there's a body part like the chest that you really want to pop in the photos – leave this until the third depletion day.

When you carb up, it will get all that glycogen first.

Remember the reason you are depleting then carb loading is so you look absolutely jacked for

the camera with fuller and rounder muscles.

If you're in the bikini class this probably isn't the look you're going for – so skip this.

## CARB LOADING

After three days of rinsing every last drop of glycogen out of your muscles, you're ready for the carb up.

The idea is that when your muscles are empty of glycogen, they will absorb a larger amount of carbohydrates and water directly into the muscle (and not between the cells and skin) to replenish glycogen stores.

This should leave you looking jacked.

Carb loading should take two days, depending on how your body reacts to the carbohydrates.

So if the shoot or show is on the Saturday, that will mean Thursday and Friday will be spent packing in the carbs.

Before you start your carb load you should do a 15-20 minute full body circuit – this will ensure your cells are open and ready to receive all those carbs in.

On your first loading day (Thursday) you can often pack in 1,000g of carbs throughout the day (person dependant). I always advise you to try this at least two or three weeks prior to your shoot or show).

Your body should have chewed through these by the time you get on the scales the following day. But if the scales and your body show you've had too many carbs, then you can just have proteins and fats throughout the Friday morning.

Then in the afternoon





try adding anywhere from 200g to 800g of carbs (again this is person specific and dependant on how much muscle you carry).

## SHOOT DAY

It will all depend on how you look on the day. You might feel that you had too many carbs the previous day – in this case you might have to back off and just have protein and fats for meals one and two.

You would then gauge how you look and make the call for carbs or another protein and fat meal. If you're flat at this stage, you could try getting more carbs in, but it could also mean that you needed to be more aggressive with your carb load on the days previous.

If you look absolutely shredded and full, then you will just want to get those muscles looking pumped, so save carbs until just before your shoot.

You can have four or five rice cakes with jam and honey 30 minutes before you go on stage or in front of the camera.

This will get some fast sugars into your bloodstream, ready for you to pump up.

## PRACTICE

If you can get lean enough fairly early on in your preparation, it is a good chance to practice the depletion and loading.

A mini-depletion of two days will let you gauge how your body reacts when you then load up on the carbs.

It's not an exact science – 1,000g of carbs may be too much for you, or not enough, so it's better to find out early on rather than a day before your shoot.





## Louise Beard - Ritsma - Professional tanning expert with Liquid Sun Rayz UK

It takes a lot of hard work, dedication and sacrifice to build a great physique. So when it's time for your shoot or show you want your body to be an image of perfection.

One thing that can make or break your hard-earned body is your tan. It needs careful attention, but it's often something that people take the least serious in their prep.

In a competition scenario a bad tan will make your physique look less than perfect.

The first thing the judges will see on stage is not your physique but the awful tan and you are likely to be marked down.

For a photoshoot even the best photographers can't make a bad tan go away. You don't get a second chance to make a first impression with a badly-tanned physique.

To achieve a great tan for your event there are some very simple steps to take.

### Preparation

The most important aspect of achieving that perfect tanned look is preparation.

If you are tanning for a show then research the federation rules on tanning - some federations do not allow instant tans such as Dream Tan.

It's a good idea to research the products on the market. The four most familiar brands are Liquid Sun Rayz, Jan Tana, Pro Tan and Dream Tan.

If you intend to use a tanning company it's always best to research them first to ensure you get the best results.

## Here are 8 essential things you should ask your tanning company before you get started:

1. An explanation of exactly what you get for your money
2. The products they use
3. Their advice on skin preparation
4. Their credentials and photos of their work
5. Their awareness of how a bodybuilding diet can affect the tan
6. Do they know how to deal with a tan when it goes wrong?
7. Backstage services such as tan repairs, touch-ups and glazing.
8. Do they offer products for touch-ups or repairs and glaze on photoshoots?

## RESULTS

Starting skin preparation well in advance is going to deliver the best results, but there are

some key factors to achieve that.

Make sure you read the skin prep instructions from the manufacturers of your tan and follow them to the letter.

It is always advisable to use the skin prep products in the tan manufacturer's range to get the best results.

This counts for both tanning with a tanning company and self-application tanning.

It is recommended that you start your skin prep a minimum of a week in advance of your show.

Liquid Sun Rayz offers the Citrus Body Scrub and Citrus Body Butter for your skin prep.

You should exfoliate Monday, Wednesday and Friday, paying attention to the drier areas and moisturize daily up to the day before your tanning appointment.

On the day of your appointment you should exfoliate and shower beforehand, but do not moisturize (unless you have exceptionally dry skin).

Remove all jewellery and make sure you

have dark, loose-fitting clothing and flip flops to wear after your tanning session. Take care of the tan.

If you don't have access to a tanning service, follow these steps for self-application:

1. Read the manufacturer's instructions on how to apply carefully, these will deliver best results.
2. Practice the tan application with the help of a trusted friend well in advance of show day or your photoshoot. You will need them to do your back and backs of your legs and be your eyes for the areas that may need attention.
3. Wear loose-fitting clothing with long sleeves and full length trousers and flip flops
4. Practice glazing with your chosen helper. You just need to put a sheen over the tan and don't overdo it.







**Anth Bailes -  
IFBB Pro bodybuilder**

Water and sodium manipulation can be another great tool in your arsenal to get you looking even more shredded.

But the key thing when looking at manipulating your water and salt is to ensure that your body fat is very low





and that you're extremely lean.

If it's not, playing around with your water and sodium will be fruitless and could even make you look worse.

The goal is to remove the water from between the skin and the muscle to give you that extra-tight 'dry' look.

This will just not be effective if you are still carrying excess body fat.

So let's assume you are in the low, single-digit body fat percentages – around 5% – and you are planning a Saturday shoot. Here's how your final week should pan out:

## MONDAY TO THURSDAY

Drink your usual amount of water (it's recommended you should drink a gallon per day)

and keep seasoning your meals with a small amount of salt.

If you're training and dieting hard you should have been doing this throughout your diet anyway.

Sea salt is preferred due to the extra minerals it contains. The only time you should really avoid salt is if you have blood pressure issues.

Otherwise add a little to your meals. Sodium is very important to your performance in the gym and also for keeping your muscles full – especially if your carb intake is lower (which is generally the case when dieting down).

Drinking plenty of water has many obvious benefits – including better muscle performance, stopping muscle breakdown and speeding up your metabolism – so it's a no-brainer.

## THE DAY BEFORE

**Sodium** – Add a small amount of sea salt to your meals up until around 6pm then do not take in any additional sodium or high sodium foods.

**Water** – Double your water intake for the day. So if you have been drinking 5 litres per day, simply increase it to 10 litres.

Stop drinking water at midnight and maybe have a glass or two of white wine before you go to bed. Alcohol acts as a diuretic.

Increasing water will obviously make you expel more. When you overload your body with water, it will go into a state of diuresis and expel more. When you stop the water, your body will take a little while to pick up on this and keep expelling even though you have stopped drinking.

It doesn't have to be wine, but over the years dry white wine has become the preferred choice for bodybuilders and it works well.

You will probably go to bed a little bloated – but don't panic, it's all part of the process.

When you stop the water, you will most likely continue to urinate throughout the night. This is what you want.







### ON THE DAY

It's pretty simple. Just have small sips of water with your meals and don't add any sea salt or eat any high sodium foods.

The muscles are hopefully already loaded with sodium and water. Too much sodium increases the chance of holding water between the muscles and the skin which you don't want because it will blur your muscle definition.

Eating without drinking in an already dehydrated state can cause stomach issues like bloating.

Two hours or so before the shoot, have a meal high in sodium.

It might sound strange, but have a couple of slices of pizza or a burger with ketchup is also a good choice.

A meal high in sodium will increase vascularity and also help give you a better pump due to the rise in blood pressure.

Eating a little junk food is common practice for a bodybuilder who has been deprived of extra calories, carbs and fats. Your body just sucks it up.







If you don't want to risk a junk meal, eating a baked potato with some chicken with added ketchup and salt would do fine.

Take in some fluids with this meal also... maybe half a litre or so.

Don't overdo the food though, as you may get some stomach discomfort. I also advise something that contains sugar - a muffin works well.

The combination of adding the sodium back in, along with the sugar, fats and water should give you a nice full, tight, dry look for your shoot or competition.

Muscles are around 70% water, so not taking in enough water will make you appear flat. Sodium will help pull extra fluid into the muscle. The more fluid/glycogen you can pull into the muscle, the larger and fuller it will look.

Obviously there are other methods than the one stated above, but this is a pretty reliable and failsafe method to use without relying on dangerous diuretics.

It's a good idea to try and be ready a couple of weeks early for your shoot, then you can do a trial run and see how your body reacts.



expenditure in the gym a bit – so I do a bit more cardio or more volume training rather than weight training.

The most important part is the week before the competition or photoshoot. It's the prime week.

I will increase my water by a litre each day of that final week.

As long as it's an increase from your normal day-to-day intake, you will start flushing out natural salts

and everything out of the body which will give you a more ripped look.

I will also have a lot of natural diuretics like Vitamin C, asparagus, dandelion or anything like that which helps flush salt out the body.

Basically I will dehydrate for 24 hours before the show. I'm flushing all the water and natural salts out. I want to get the last bits of water out from under the skin.

So when I dehydrate it gives the illusion of a harder more 'cut' look.



## Ryan Terry - IFBB Men's Physique Pro athlete and fitness model

If I'm prepping for a photoshoot or a show I will always give myself four or five weeks so I know exactly what the shoot is about.

It all depends on what condition or what kind of look you want to bring to the shoot.

It will change whether it's for a softer magazine like fitness or lifestyle, or if I'm going for a more hardcore one.

If I'm going for a competition I will manipulate and play around with my water and sodium levels a little bit to give myself a different look.

## FOOD

I will start to decrease my food and increase my expenditure in the gym because I'm looking to lose body fat.

I don't want to be doing anything drastic because I'm often not that far off peak shape anyway four or five weeks out from a shoot.

I will do little things to taper down and tighten up. I will clean up my diet, reduce my food a bit and increase my





## CARB UP

I will start to taper my carbs right down a week out. Then the last three days before a photo shoot, or going on stage, I will stop training altogether and I will start to carb up.

This fills all your muscles with glycogen so when you pump up before you go on stage you basically 'fill up' and it gives the illusion of a bigger, fuller look.

When I am depleting on the carbs, I won't go down to zero carbs. My lowest is probably 150g-200g per day, so it's about half of what I normally have.

For a competition I will go down to about 50g to really deplete and then fill back up. This is because your body works like a sponge when depleted - it will absorb everything. You will just have a massive rebound.

Practice depletion

I will practice depleting. I didn't at the start, but I really do advise it.

Don't do anything drastic though. Don't play about with your sodium and water too much because it's not really a healthy thing to do all the time. Twice or three times a year is fine.

But for a photoshoot you don't have to do anything as drastic as a competition.

But it's always good to see how you react to different methods and different diets.

I react better to higher carbs and less fats but a lot of people nowadays are going towards high fats and less carbs.

It all depends on how your body reacts to certain things. It's always good to have a trial run before you're going in because there's nothing worse than booking a shoot in and then in peak week you mess it all up by packing too many carbs in and spilling over.

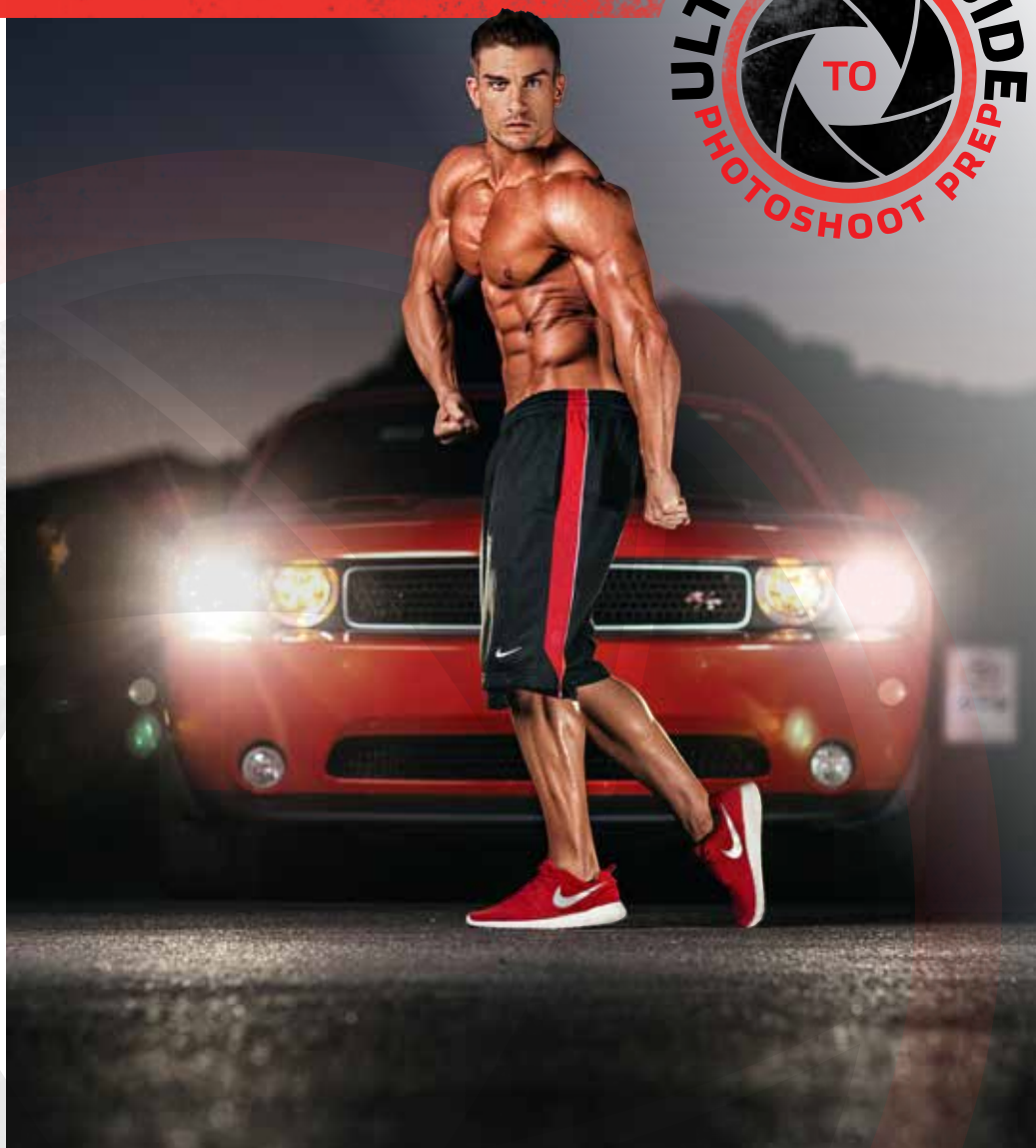
For me I know where my limits are after many years of practice. But I have messed it up before where you spill over and look smooth or you put too much salt in or take too much out and look flat.

On your first shoot do minimal changes and see how that is and then build it up each time. It is trial and error - you're never going to get it all right first time, but that's just bodybuilding.

Try not to panic because at the end of the day you've got a shoot booked because you're pretty much ready or that photographer wants to shoot with you.

There's no point doing anything drastic where you could change the way you look or create injury.

Overall, it's a case of coming down me-





thodically. Have a plan – don't just be like 'I need to be emaciated because I need to get shredded.'

Try and do it week by week and step by step.

## POSE PRACTICE

Posing practice and learning how to contract your muscles yourself is really important so you know how you look going into a shoot or competition.

Always practice contracting your muscles so you can see what your best assets are. I will always practice in front of the mirror going into a shoot

You need to assess what shots are going to be good for you and which are not. You can always look at magazines to see which shot or pose would look good with your body.

Pick out the shots on a shoot that will fit your shape and your symmetry – if you've got a wide waist you would never stand straight on to a camera because it obviously emphasises the waist.

You can always stand off-centre, or to the side, to give the illusion of a tapered waist.

It's always good to practice looking as relaxed as possible while your body is as tense as possible, because that's what fitness shoots are all about – showing your condition.

On stage there are set poses you have to know.

There's nothing worse than if you're going on stage or a shoot and you've not got a clue what you're doing.

I made that mistake when I first went on stage.

I didn't understand the posing or the contracting of muscles. I didn't know what I was doing so I kept looking down which really shows that you've not researched and you're not confident.

It is all part of prep, but it is peace of mind too. You will always feel more relaxed and more confident if you have had that practice.

## BODY PREPARATION

You've always got to make sure your skin is looking good and clean before a photoshoot so it's always good to get a tan.

You can get a spray tan but I sometimes go on the sunbed before a shoot to tan up a bit because you don't want to go in pale and patchy.

Make sure you get a few good nights of sleep because there's nothing worse than coming in with bags under your eyes.

For a photoshoot I will get the clippers out for facial and body hair. I don't want to get too shiny and smooth.

I do take the hair off to give you more cuts, but I don't take it down to shaving or I mac. I trim it down and if I'm going on stage and putting stage tan on then I will razor or I mac.

I will use baby oil for a shoot, but I don't put layers and layers on because you will become tacky.

Layer it on slowly and see how your body reacts to it. Because I go on the sun bed my skin dries out a lot, so I have to put like half a bottle on.





**BAILEY.**





## SHOOT DAY

How you eat on the day of the shoot will depend what time you're shooting.

If you're shooting later in the day then obviously you need to eat. You cannot not eat, because you would be depleted.

I should be 'full' and carbed-up after the three days anyway.

So I will graze on carbs during the day. I'm not trying to expend any calories before the shoot.

If the shoot is later on in the day I will have a few carb meals and then go onto some fats which will slow the digestion of the carbs down.

I'm careful not to fill my stomach or do anything that is going to bloat me.

Prior to the shoot I will have a few sugars – raisins and dark chocolate – and a few caps of water, because I'm still dehydrated. I want a

little bit of water still in the muscle so it gives me the pump and the fuller look.

I will put a bit of water back into my body and then start pumping up.

This is all 15 or 20 minutes before I go on stage or in front of the camera just to get the vascularity there and the fullness in my muscle.

## SHOOT ADVICE

Before a shoot it's always good to talk to the photographer so you know what to expect. Get a feel for what the shoot's going to be like and how they work.

Put your ideas across. It's good to have your own ideas so you're not just a robot going through the motions.

Be as personable as possible because often photographers are attached to magazines. You want to make a good rapport with them. It has a knock-on effect. If you want to make it into a career then it's always good to have those relationships.

It's always worth looking into the photographer's background and look what kind of imagery they shoot so you have got a feel for it and you're not going in blind.

Peaking for multiple shoots

When I was out in Las Vegas for the Olympia I was there for a week and did seven or eight shoots.

You would never normally fit this many photoshoots into a week – you would always give yourself two or three weeks between shoots or as long as possible. But because of the timescales, and being in America, I didn't really carb up or carb down.

It's a massive expenditure when you're doing physique photoshoot. It's a lot more than a fashion shoot because you have to tense everything all the time, so you are expending and burning a lot of fat.

So for me I had quite high carbs because I was expending so many calories and I just couldn't fill up enough.

So the more food I had the better I looked. Because I had that many shoots I just kept eating and eating.

I kept flushing water through all the time. I didn't do much with my sodium. I reduced it slightly, but didn't cut it completely out and I had water constantly every day to flush it through.







**Nina Ross - IFBB Bikini Fitness Pro athlete and fitness model**

It's important to get your final week absolutely perfect to be in the best possible condition for your photoshoot.

My final week changes from my usual programme - I generally drop my carbs down for a few days, up my training and change it slightly as I get closer to my carb load. Then I will do a carb load where my carbohydrate intake is higher than during my normal diet.

I don't just cut water completely, even when I drop it down. I do increase my water in the final week - but nothing extreme.

I will just sip little amounts of water on the day of the shoot or show - it's so important to keep water going in.

From experience I'm much worse if I've tried to take water out. Your muscles are 70% water so you don't change the ratio. Your body doesn't say "I'll take it from the skin but leave it in the muscles."

The ratio doesn't change - so when you deplete it not only takes it from the skin but it takes it out of the muscle so you can end up looking really flat.

This can make you look even worse because some people think 'I'm looking really flat so I need to eat some more carbs.' So they start carb-ing up more.

But because you need water to draw the carbs into the muscle, what's happening is the carbs can't be drawn into the muscle so they just sit on the skin and people start looking smoother and smoother.

They think that they are not carb-ing up enough so they go through that whole cycle.

This is why often people will look better a few days after the show because they have actually taken in water. So once they've taken in water those carbs they had been eating can actually be drawn into the muscle.

I drink about three to four litres per day when I'm training. When I up the water, I just go with my body, I don't really focus on the number of litres I need.

You can tell from the colour of your urine whether you need water or not.

Everyone is different, so there's no hard and fast rule. You might get someone that already drinks a lot of water - like four or five litres - they're already hitting five litres, so they might have to drink eight or nine.





## DIETING

My dieting is very different to what a lot of other people do - like the standard chicken broccoli and sweet potato.

My final week is completely different to my normal diet in terms of my macronutrient split.

Generally it's lean protein sources, medium amounts of fat and a lot of vegetables really, which are the only source of carbs I have.

When I'm carb-ing up I will usually do it a few days out from the show, but when you deplete you have to ensure you fully deplete the muscles for it to be effective when you load.

If you're not depleted you will not load as effectively as you need to.

So I will still eat green vegetables, but for a few days I will cut my starchy carbs right down.

With my training I do a lot of volume in terms of sets because I don't do a massive amount of reps. But I will do more in my final depletion session. It's really intense before my final carb load.

For females I don't think you need longer than a day on carb loading. When my carbs go up then my protein comes down as a proportion of my daily macros on a load and I don't take in much fat at all.

It's mainly carbs in that period. I mix up a lot of things - I like to have a lot of sources including fruit as well. When they're carb-ing up, a lot of people will hit starchy carbs, pizzas, breads and things with flour and that can bung you up, especially if you're manipulating salt as well.

So a lot of the time when I'm carb-ing up I try to have a real variety - so fruits and vegetables, as well as starchy stuff as well.

The hard work is done in the last week. Those that kill themselves dieting and training in the final week are those that are not quite up to where they should be. I like to be in condition two or three weeks before.

I like to be in shape, ready to go. It's not a case of peaking too early - it just means you can have a few extra feed ups.

You have got more time to play with then and you can enjoy your last few weeks.







Remember, you can't dry fat out. So, if you try to ram in your last week before the show or shoot to dry out, if you're out of condition you won't be able to dry out.

## **DAY BEFORE THE SHOOT**

Avoid big meals because you want your stomach to be small. Definitely avoid salts after you've dropped your water down and a glass of wine normally dehydrates you and helps you relax as well.

Don't go mad, obviously, but that little glass of wine does help make you feel a little bit better. Sometimes it can help with a bit of sleep if you're nervous.

I usually go for a shot of spirit or a white wine. If you think when you go out drinking, the next day it dehydrates your system, so when you wake up the next day and think 'gosh, I look really lean' – it's not, it's just dehydration.

A lot of people think they have abs, then they have a meal and it's all gone.

So doing this on your prep, you should wake up next day nice and dry with your skin really thin if you've done your carb up right.

Generally I won't train the day before, but





it will depend on how I'm looking. If I feel I need to, I will. But I would never really advise to train heavy or do anything damaging, because it will cause swelling in the muscle. Any damage can hold water and any stress can hold water, so with exercise being a stressor it can make you hold water.

Just go for an outdoor walk to keep the legs moving. Keeping your legs elevated above your heart as much as you can will reduce the water.

Relax as much as you can the day before. The hard work is done, nothing you can really do will change the way you look by this point.

The only way I would put anything in to change the way I looked was if I had over-carbed and I needed to get rid of a little bit by depleting it. Also if I feel a little bit flat and my carb load isn't moving, I generally would do a little circuit – but nothing crazy or heavy.

## ON THE DAY

I

would advise small food and energy foods. A lot of people go for chocolates and sweets, but I say 'don't'. I usually stick to a little bit of sweet potato or some dried fruit. I really dry my vegetables out so on the day I am just nibbling on things.

I also go for anything with a high amino acid profile like chicken. But not a huge amount, just enough to nibble on through the day to give you energy.

Dried fruit works really well so make sure you have raisins or dates with you, rather than your sugars.

Because if you've dropped your water down but you're still drinking water, the sugars





hold water on the skin.

So a lot of the time people will eat a load of sweets because they don't think it will affect the way they look, but actually then if you take any water in it will start storing on the skin.

So I advise not to take on any sugars - fructose - at all. If you're feeling a little peaky, lethargic and tired, swill something sugary around your mouth and spit it out because it releases the same endorphins in the brain. Your body will think you've had a sugary drink, and even though you haven't actually consumed it, it will give you that little bit of energy.

## MISTAKES

Cutting water altogether is a very dangerous mistake.

It's not something I've ever done, but drinking alcohol on the day of the show is also one.

People use it to calm their nerves, but even if you think you've lost a little bit of inhibition and you feel '10 men' on stage, people can see it.

If you're going to have something, just have a couple of sips of wine an hour before you go on stage, if you feel you need it just to calm your nerves.

## BUT BE CAREFUL.

Sugar is one that I have done before and it has made me look worse. So I would avoid eating too many sugars and sweets.

I would not advise eating junk food before you go on stage like some of the male bodybuilders.

You want your waist to be dinky tiny, and if you've got something that is not moving in your stomach then you will look and feel bloated on stage.

The only time I would say maybe think about it is if the person was looking really, really flat like they've not eaten enough and they're starting to look stringy and empty.

I would say go and have a good meal and drink some water on top of that.

## PHOTOSHOOTS

Exfoliate the week leading up to it for your skin - so knees, ankles and elbows. For a shoot don't go with a stage tan. It happens a lot when you go on a shoot, you forget the camera picks up on everything like hands.

So if you've got really botched-job hands, it really doesn't look good on a shoot.

I would say go for a spray tan and have a couple of spray tans that you can actually shower and wash off to look fresh for a shoot.

On stage the lights don't show up as much of the tan if there are errors with it. If you've got a really patchy and uneven tan then it will look horrific on a picture.

Make sure you pick a photographer that you like - so do your research on them.

You should ensure you're comfortable with the shoot you're going for and find out from the photographer the kind of stuff they're going to do and the photos and looks you want to go for.

Send them suggestions of shots you want to go for beforehand, rather than turning up on the day not knowing what you're going to do because it will just make you feel uncomfortable and anxious.

Prepare for it like you would prepare for an exam - do your research and revision beforehand.

You will feel most comfortable because you will know what you're aiming for. When you're researching shots you want to get, it's advisable to look at people with similar

physiques to

you. It's all well and good looking at a certain shot, but if your body looks nothing like that then obviously the shot won't be as good.

Look for similar physiques rather than just shots you want because that way what has worked for them may work for you. So find angles and looks that work for you.

I would go for a softer look for a photographer's shoot than I would for the stage. Not many people want to see vascularity in a woman if you're called for a shoot. So going all lean and vascular, dry, grainy and hard for a shoot, unless that's specifically what's required, it can actually de-feminise the shoot.

It's all trial and error to know how your body responds and knowing what works. It's all tweaking and adjusting.

With my clients I will get them to do a trial run of the show a month before so there's no guess work and we know how they respond to things.

This means you can tweak things to ensure they're in the best condition when the day comes.

