



Starter Guide

Sustainable health, weight loss, energy & strength after 50

***A note from Alex.** If you're trying to lose weight after 50 — maybe with a GLP-1, maybe on your own — I've been right where you are. When I started weekly Zepbound, I went looking for calm, trustworthy guidance made for people our age and came up empty. So I made it. Everything in this guide is what actually helped me, in plain language, with no hype. I'm really glad you're here.*

Welcome

If you're over 50 and working to lose weight, gain energy, or simply feel like yourself again, you don't need extreme diets or punishing workouts. You need a few proven habits, repeated consistently. This guide gives you the specifics — how much protein and water your body actually needs, where to start with movement, and how to make a GLP-1 medication work better if you're on one. Everything here is built for life after 50.

1 Protein — your #1 priority after 50

Protein is the single most important nutrient to get right after 50. As we age, the body becomes less efficient at turning protein into muscle, and we naturally lose muscle each decade (a process called sarcopenia). If you're losing weight — especially on a GLP-1 medication like Ozempic, Wegovy, Mounjaro, or Zepbound — some of that loss can come from muscle unless you protect it. Protein, paired with strength training, keeps the muscle that keeps you strong and mobile.

How much? Research on older adults and GLP-1 users points to about **1.2–1.6 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight per day** — roughly **0.5–0.7 grams per pound** — well above the bare-minimum RDA. Aim for 20–35 grams of protein at each meal, since spreading it through the day builds muscle better than one big serving. (If you have kidney disease, talk with your doctor before increasing protein.)

Your daily protein target

Body weight	Daily protein target	Roughly per meal
150 lb	75–105 g	20–26 g
175 lb	88–123 g	22–31 g
200 lb	100–140 g	25–35 g
225 lb	113–158 g	28–40 g
250 lb	125–175 g	31–44 g

Easy ways to hit your number

Build meals and snacks around these:

Food	Serving	Protein	~Calories
Chicken breast, cooked	4 oz	26 g	185
Salmon, cooked	4 oz	25 g	210
Lean beef (sirloin)	4 oz	26 g	200
Cottage cheese (low-fat)	1 cup	28 g	165
Greek yogurt (nonfat, plain)	1 cup	17 g	100
Canned tuna (in water)	1 can (5 oz)	20 g	100
Whey protein shake	1 scoop	24 g	120
Protein bar	1 bar	20 g	200
Eggs	2 large	12 g	140
Lentils, cooked	1 cup	18 g	230
Edamame, shelled	1 cup	17 g	190
Tofu, firm	1/2 cup	10 g	90

Values are approximate (USDA FoodData Central).

Learn more: [Endocrine Society — protein protects muscle on weight-loss drugs](#) · [USDA FoodData Central \(look up any food\)](#)

2 Hydration — the simplest habit with the biggest payoff

Water does quiet but important work: steadier energy, smoother digestion, better workouts, and clearer appetite signals (we often mistake thirst for hunger). The Mayo Clinic suggests most adults take in roughly **11.5 cups (women) to 15.5 cups (men) of total fluid a day** — and that includes water from food and other drinks like tea and coffee.

A simple starting target is about **half an ounce of water per pound of body weight**. Use the table below as your baseline, then drink more on hot days, when you exercise, or if your medication increases thirst. If you've been told to limit fluids for a heart or kidney condition, follow your doctor's guidance instead.

Your daily water target

Body weight	Daily target (0.5 oz/lb)	In cups (8 oz)	Active days (0.67 oz/lb)
150 lb	75 oz	about 9 cups	100 oz
175 lb	88 oz	about 11 cups	117 oz
200 lb	100 oz	about 12.5 cups	133 oz
225 lb	113 oz	about 14 cups	150 oz
250 lb	125 oz	about 15.5 cups	167 oz

Make it automatic: a glass when you wake up, a refillable bottle you keep in sight, and one glass of water before each meal.

Learn more: [Mayo Clinic — how much water should you drink every day?](#)

3 Movement — start simple, then climb

Consistency beats intensity every time, especially at the start. The CDC recommends adults aim for about **150 minutes of moderate activity a week** (think 30 minutes, 5 days), **strength training on 2 or more days** that works all the major muscle groups, plus a little balance work. That can sound like a lot — so don't start there. Start small and move up one level at a time.

Your movement ladder

Level	Focus	Examples	When to start
1 — Foundation	Daily movement & mobility	Walking 10–30 min, gentle stretching, standing up from a chair without hands	Today
2 — Build	Bodyweight & bands	Sit-to-stands, wall push-ups, resistance-band rows, water aerobics	After ~2 weeks of steady walking
3 — Strengthen	Resistance training	Dumbbells or machines, full-body twice a week, all major muscle groups	When Level 2 feels easy
4 — Progress	Load & balance	Heavier compound lifts, progressive overload, single-leg balance drills	Once strength is a steady habit

The highest-leverage habit on this whole list is **two strength sessions a week**. It is what protects muscle after 50, and it is exactly what makes weight loss — with or without a GLP-1 — actually hold.

Learn more: [CDC — physical activity for older adults](#)

4 Nutrition beyond protein — fiber first

After protein, **fiber** is the nutrient most of us over 50 don't get enough of — and it quietly does a lot of work. Fiber keeps you **regular and helps prevent constipation** (a very common complaint, especially on a GLP-1), feeds the healthy bacteria in your gut, slows digestion so you feel **full longer and snack less**, and helps steady blood sugar and lower cholesterol. Most adults get only about half of what they need.

Aim for roughly **25–35 grams of fiber a day**, and build up to it gradually **with plenty of water** — adding fiber too fast without fluids can actually make bloating and constipation worse. For the rest of your plate, keep it simple: fill half with vegetables and fiber, lead with protein before carbs, and choose whole foods over processed ones most of the time. You don't need to be perfect — sustainable beats strict.

Easy ways to get more fiber

Work a few of these in each day:

Food	Serving	Fiber
Lentils, cooked	1 cup	16 g
Black beans, cooked	1 cup	15 g
Chia seeds	2 tbsp	10 g
Raspberries	1 cup	8 g
Avocado	1/2	7 g
Pear (with skin)	1 medium	6 g
Broccoli, cooked	1 cup	5 g
Oats (rolled, dry)	1/2 cup	4 g
Apple (with skin)	1 medium	4 g
Almonds	1 oz (about 23)	4 g

Values are approximate (USDA FoodData Central). Increase fiber slowly and drink water with it.

5 GLP-1 success (if you take a medication)

If you take a GLP-1 medication, it's a powerful tool — but it works best with the right habits underneath it. These medicines quiet appetite, which makes it easy to under-eat protein and lose muscle. So the priorities are simple: hit your protein, strength train twice a week, stay hydrated, and eat slowly.

Managing common side effects

GLP-1 medications are strong, and side effects are common — you're not doing anything wrong, and many of them ease as your body adjusts. A few things that genuinely help:

- **Nausea** is often about both *what* you eat and the *strength* of the medication. Keep meals smaller and blander while you adjust — steer away from spicy, fatty, fried, and heavy foods, and slow down when you eat.
- **Constipation** usually comes from too little fiber and/or fluid. Lean on the fiber and hydration habits above — more vegetables, beans, and water often fix it.
- **Everyone's experience is different.** Some people sail through; others have a harder time, and it can change with each dose increase. That's normal.
- **Don't suffer in silence.** If you're having daily problems — or accidents — there is nothing to be ashamed or embarrassed about. Tell your doctor exactly what's going on. They can adjust your dose, timing, or plan. This is precisely what they're supposed to help you with when taking the meds.

One question almost everyone asks is whether they'll have to stay on the medication forever. The honest answer, and what the research actually shows, is in the article below.

Learn more: [Do You Have to Stay on a GLP-1 Forever?](#) · [Endocrine Society — protein & GLP-1 muscle loss](#)

Your first week

- ☐ Find your protein target in the table and hit it at one meal a day.
- ☐ Drink a glass of water when you wake up and before each meal.
- ☐ Take a 10–20 minute walk on most days.
- ☐ Add one strength session this week — even bodyweight counts.
- ☐ Add one high-fiber food (beans, berries, or oats) each day.
- ☐ Subscribe to the newsletter and download the free app to track it all.

Keep going with Steady After 50

- **Track it all, free:** Steady After 50 and Steady Move are free on iPhone and Android — download on the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#). No ads, no in-app purchases, no subscription.
- **Get the weekly newsletter:** steadyafter50.substack.com
- **Read next:** [Do You Have to Stay on a GLP-1 Forever?](#)

Final thoughts

Health after 50 isn't about perfection — it's about habits that quietly compound. Pick one thing from this guide (most people start with protein), do it for a week, then add the next. Small actions, repeated consistently, are what create real change.

Sources & further reading

- [Endocrine Society \(ENDO 2025\) — protein and muscle preservation on weight-loss drugs](#)
- [USDA FoodData Central — food nutrient lookup](#)
- [Mayo Clinic — daily water needs](#)
- [CDC — physical activity for older adults](#)

This guide is for general education only and is not medical advice. Alex is not a doctor or other licensed healthcare provider. Always consult your physician or qualified healthcare professional before changing your diet, protein or fluid intake, exercise program, or any medication — including GLP-1 or other prescription drugs — especially if you have kidney, heart, or other health conditions.

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“Stay steady out there.” — Alex, Steady After 50