ASPIRE FUNCTIONAL
AESTHETICS & WELLNESS

FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE · METABOLIC HEALTH · FAT LOSS

Why Your Weight Loss Isn't Working

Even When You're Working Out

By Nikki Guzzo, PA-C & Brandon Guzzo | Aspire Functional Aesthetics & Wellness

You're not failing because you're lazy. You're failing because nobody explained *how your body actually works.*

Here are the 5 mistakes we see most — and exactly how to fix them.

MISTAKE 01 PROTEIN — TOO LITTLE, OR CRAZIER STILL, TOO MUCH

Not Enough Protein — Or Even Too Much — *And Not Enough Calories*

If you're not eating enough protein, your body will not burn fat. It burns muscle instead. Under-eat and your body enters survival mode: it holds fat and cannibalizes muscle for quick glucose.

But here's the twist almost no one talks about: **you can eat too much protein and store it as fat.** This is gluconeogenesis — your liver converting excess amino acids into glucose. When that glucose isn't immediately needed, insulin fires and it gets stored as fat.

The feeding window is critical. Your body can effectively use roughly 30–40g of protein per meal for muscle protein synthesis. Pile 150g into a single 60-minute window and most triggers gluconeogenesis, spikes blood sugar, fires insulin, and lands in fat storage. **Distribute protein across meals — that's what actually works.**

> **Target: 0.7–1g protein per lb body weight — spread across meals all day**
>
> 30–40g per meal is your effective ceiling. Eggs, fish, lean meat, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese at every meal. Never pile a full day's intake into one window — you'll convert the excess to fat.

MISTAKE 02 ELECTROLYTES & CELLULAR FAT BURNING

Not Using Electrolytes to *Fuel Fat Oxidation*

Electrolytes are the electrical system that drives fat burning at the cellular level. Fat oxidation requires active transport to move fatty acids into mitochondria — systems running on electrochemical gradients maintained by electrolytes.

Sodium is used ~4x more in fat oxidation than for basic hydration. The sodium-potassium pump powers fatty acid transport across cell membranes. When sodium is low, fat oxidation slows regardless of how well you eat or train. Magnesium activates 300+ enzymatic reactions, many directly in fat metabolism. Most active people are chronically depleted in both.

> *Your mitochondria are fat-burning furnaces. Electrolytes are the electricity running the fuel pumps. Without them, the furnace sits full of fuel with nothing to ignite it.*

4x	300+	68%
more sodium required for fat oxidation vs. basic cellular hydration	enzymatic reactions requiring magnesium — many directly in fat metabolism	of active adults estimated suboptimal in magnesium

MISTAKE 03 TRAINING ZONE INTELLIGENCE

Not Understanding Zone 2, 3 & 4 — *You're Training in the Wrong Zone*

Most people exercising for fat loss are pushing too hard — almost every session. They get sweaty, feel accomplished, and barely touch fat stores. The harder you push past Zone 2, the less fat you actually burn:

Zone	Heart Rate	Primary Fuel	Best For
Zone 2	60–70% max HR	Fat (80–90% fat oxidation) — stored fat is primary fuel. Peak fat burning.	Fat loss, mitochondria, longevity base
Zone 3	70–80% max HR	Mixed — shifting to glucose. Fat burning drops sharply.	Aerobic endurance, tempo
Zone 4	80–90% max HR	Almost entirely glucose. Fat burning is OFF.	Speed & power — not fat loss

Zone 2 is your fat-burning sweet spot — and most people never go there. At conversational pace (60–70% max HR), 80–90% of fuel comes from stored fat. Target 150–180 minutes of Zone 2 per week. Zone 4 has its place for performance — but the majority of your fat-loss training volume should be Zone 2. Most people have this completely backwards.

MISTAKE 04 HEART RATE & THE MAF METHOD

Ignoring Heart Rate — *Your Personal Fat-Burning Ceiling*

Your heart rate is a real-time readout of what fuel your body is burning. The MAF (Maximum Aerobic Function) method gives you a precise, individualized target: **180 minus your age.** Stay below that ceiling and you're in prime fat oxidation. Exceed it consistently and you've switched from fat to glucose — and eventually muscle.

> **Calculate Your MAF Number: 180 − your age = your aerobic ceiling**
>
> A 45-year-old's ceiling is 135 bpm. Stay below it for Zone 2 sessions. It will feel frustratingly slow — that's the point. If you feel like you're barely working, you're exactly where fat oxidation peaks. Get a heart rate monitor. Use it every session.

MISTAKE 05 THE MOST CRITICAL MISTAKE

Training Too Hard Fasted — *You're Burning Muscle, Not Fat*

This single habit destroys more metabolisms than anything else we see. When you push into Zone 3+ fasted, your body can't mobilize fat fast enough. It turns to the next available fuel: **your skeletal muscle.** Through gluconeogenesis, it breaks muscle tissue into glucose to keep pace. You lose the very tissue that keeps your metabolism running.

> **Critical — Stop This Immediately If It Describes Your Morning Routine:**

> High-intensity fasted training burns muscle, not fat — every single session. Morning cortisol peaks on waking. Add high-intensity fasted training and you have maximum cortisol + zero fuel = maximum muscle breakdown. We see patients doing this six days a week achieving progressively worse body composition over months.

Zone 2 fasted cardio (below MAF): excellent — fat oxidation meets the demand. High-intensity fasted: stop immediately. For hard sessions, eat a protein-rich meal 60–90 minutes before. Or some eat clean carbohydrates 15-30 min before (EX: a piece or two of fruit or a cup of oats). Protect your muscle. Protect your metabolism.

> *High-intensity fasted training is like running your car on fumes by burning the seats for fuel. At low intensity, your body reaches stored fat. At high intensity, it grabs what's closest: your muscle.*

THE FIVE-FIX PROTOCOL — START THIS WEEK

Stack these corrections one at a time. Each one compounds on the last.

01. Distribute Your Protein All Day

Eggs, fish, lean meat, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese. Never pile a day's intake into one window — the excess converts to fat via gluconeogenesis.

0.7–1g per lb body weight · 30–40g per meal · complete proteins at every meal

02. Electrolytes Throughout the Day

Most active people are chronically depleted. This single correction moves body composition faster than most people expect.

Quality electrolyte mix daily · Magnesium 300–400mg nightly · don't fear sodium

03. Build Your Zone 2 Base First

This is your fat-burning foundation. Build it before adding intensity. It feels slow — that is the point and the mechanism.

150–180 min/week · 60–70% max HR · conversational pace · 3–5 sessions

04. Know Your MAF Number and Train to It

Stay below your MAF ceiling on Zone 2 days. Aerobic adaptation takes weeks — the fat-loss results compound significantly over time.

MAF = 180 − your age · wear a heart rate monitor every session

05. Stop High-Intensity Fasted Training

For hard sessions, eat a small protein-rich meal 60–90 min before. Protect your muscle. Protect your metabolic rate.

Zone 2 fasted = great · High-intensity fasted = stop · Hard sessions = always fed

You're Not Broken. You're Running the Wrong Program.

Understand the mechanism — and the fix becomes clear.

Distribute your protein. Fuel your cells with electrolytes all day. Train in Zone 2. Know your MAF number. Stop high-intensity fasted work. None of these are complicated changes — but every one requires understanding why it matters.

Every patient we've described was working hard, showing up consistently, doing what they believed was right. They just didn't have accurate information about how the body actually burns fat. Without that, effort alone cannot produce the results they deserved.

We run the labs. We look at the whole picture. We build a protocol specific to how your body works — because everyone's metabolic starting point is different, and cookie-cutter approaches are why so many people stay stuck.