

Health Tip: Calorie Basics

This March--National Nutrition Month--marks a nutrition achievement: major soft-drink companies committed to withdraw full-calorie beverages from schools worldwide, replacing them with healthier options, such as water, juices in smaller sizes, and low-fat or skim milk. Sugary energy drinks have been banned. Gatorade will be available only during physical activity.

We all need calories everyday for energy; yet not all calories are created equal in terms of a foods nutritional value. Moreover, we come in all sizes and each person's body burns energy (calories) at different rates. A 31-year old, moderately active female needs about 2,000 calories a day, compared to a male of the same age and activity level who may need up to 2,600. While there is not one specific number of calories that everyone should eat, there is a recommended range based on gender, age and activity level.

Gender	Age	Sedentary	Moderately Active	Active
		Calories		
Female	19–30	2,000	2,000–2,200	2,400
	31–50	1,800	2,000	2,200
	51+	1,600	1,800	2,000–2,200
Male	19–30	2,400	2,600–2,800	3,000
	31–50	2,200	2,400–2,600	2,800–3,000
	51+	2,000	2,200–2,400	2,400–2,800

Sedentary means a lifestyle including only light activity associated with typical day-to-day life.

Moderately active includes activity equivalent to walking about 1.5 to 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour, in addition to typical day-to-day activity. An *active* lifestyle includes exercise equivalent to walking more than 3 miles per day.

In figuring the right amount of calories for you, also consider a healthy weight goal:

- To maintain weight, calories in (food and beverages consumed) should equal calories out (metabolism + routine activity + physical activity).
- To lose weight, calories in should be *less than* calories out.
- To gain weight, calories in should be *more than* calories out.

Consuming calories in excess of calorie needs from poor-nutrient and calorie-dense foods, such as sugar and solid fats, and having a sedentary lifestyle is a dangerous situation. It can result in obesity and an increased risk for disease. Work on improving your energy-intake and wellbeing:

- Make nutrient-dense selections from the basic food groups, especially of foods that are good sources of vitamin E, potassium, calcium, and fiber.
- To lose a pound a week, consume approximately 3,500 fewer calories per week. Reduce your daily intake by 500 calories per day. Keep your metabolism revved up by eating smaller, more frequent meals.
- Keep a food diary. There are several free calorie calculators and trackers online. Look up nutrient content on the USDA website: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/search>
- Increase physical activity. If you are not active, start walking and gradually build up to 1.5 to 3 miles per day. As the weather warms, enjoy family exercise and outside games.
- Consult with your doctor, health professional, or wellness coach about a nutrition and exercise program that will meet your needs. Pregnant and lactating women may need an additional 300 calories each day; talk with your doctor to find out your calorie needs.

Sources: HHS Dietary Guidelines for Americans, MedlinePlus, American Dietetics Association, American Heart Association, MyFoodPyramid.gov, LifeWork Strategies, and Washington and Shady Grove Adventist Hospitals. The Health Tip of the Week is for educational purposes only. For additional information, consult your physician. Please feel free to copy and distribute this health resource.