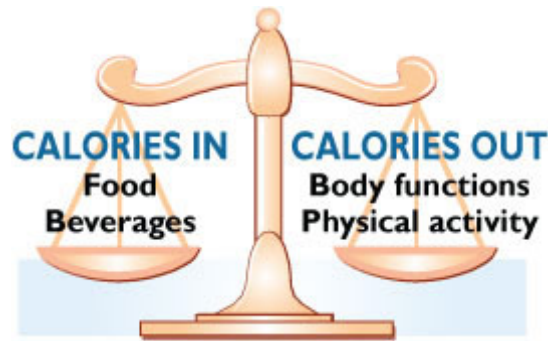


Calorie Balance Equation

When it comes to maintaining a healthy weight for a lifetime, the bottom line is – **CALORIES COUNT!** Weight management is all about balance—balancing the number of calories an individual consumes with the number of calories their body uses or "burns off."

- A *calorie* is defined as a unit of energy supplied by food. A calorie is a calorie regardless of its source. Whether someone is eating carbohydrates, fats, sugars, or proteins -- all of them contain calories.
- *Caloric balance* is like a scale. To remain in balance and maintain body weight, the calories consumed (from foods) must be balanced by the calories used (in normal body functions, daily activities, and exercise).



If you are...	Your caloric balance status is...
Maintaining weight	" in balance. " Eating roughly the same number of calories that the body is using. Weight will remain stable.
Gaining weight	" in caloric excess. " Eating more calories than the body is using. The body will store these extra calories as fat and weight gain will occur.
Losing weight	" in caloric deficit. " Eating fewer calories than the body is using. The body is pulling from its fat storage cells for energy resulting in weight loss.

Am I in Caloric Balance?

If you are maintaining your current body weight, you are in caloric balance. If you need to gain weight or to lose weight, you'll need to tip the balance scale in one direction or another to achieve the weight goal.

If you need to tip the balance scale in the direction of losing weight, keep in mind that it takes approximately 3,500 calories below your calorie needs to lose one (1) pound of body fat. To lose about 1 to 2 pounds per week, you'll need to reduce your caloric intake by 500—1000 calories per day.²

To learn how many calories you are currently eating, begin journaling or self-monitoring the food and beverages you consume each day. By self-monitoring what is consumed, an individual becomes more aware of everything they are putting in their mouth. Also, begin monitoring the amount of physical activity you do each day. You can use pen and paper to self-monitor or you can use a web-based program where you enter the foods you have eaten and the physical activity you have done to see how the calorie intake compares to their calorie expenditure. By studying your food diary you can become more aware of your eating habits and the number of calories you consume on an average day.

Physical activities (both daily activities and exercise) help tip the balance scale by increasing the calories they expend each day.

Recommended Physical Activity Levels

- Adults should be physically active at a moderate intensity for at least 30 minutes, 5 or more days per week.
- Increasing the intensity or the amount of time that they are physically active can have even greater health benefits and may be needed to control body weight. About 60 minutes a day may be needed to prevent weight gain.
- Encourage children and teenagers to be physically active for at least 60 minutes each day 5 to 7 days per week.

So the bottom line is... each person's body is unique and may have different caloric needs. This is why they received their metabolic measurement using the MedGem® device. A healthy lifestyle requires balance, in the foods they eat, in the beverages they consume, in the way they carry out their daily activities, and in the amount of physical activity or exercise they include in your daily routine. While counting calories is not always necessary, it is the best behavioral tool used in self-management and it does help an individual gain awareness of their eating habits as they strive to achieve energy balance. The ultimate test of balance is whether or not they are gaining, maintaining, or losing weight.

Questions and Answers about Calories

Q: Are fat-free and low-fat foods low in calories?

A: Not always. Some fat-free and low-fat foods have extra sugars, which push the calorie amount right back up. So just because it is fat-free does not mean it is low calorie.

Always read the Nutrition Facts food label to find out the calorie content. Remember, this is the calorie content for **one serving** of the food item, so be sure and check the serving size. If you eat more than one serving, you'll be eating more calories than is listed on the food label. For more information about the Nutrition Facts food label, refer to the *Label Lingo* document in your reference binder.

Q: If I eat late at night, will these calories automatically turn into body fat?

A: The time of day isn't what affects how your body uses calories. It's the overall number of calories you eat and the calories you burn over the course of 24 hours that affects your weight.

Q: I've heard it is more important to worry about carbohydrates than calories. Is this true?

A: By focusing only on carbohydrates, you can still eat too many calories. Also, if you drastically reduce the variety of foods in your diet, you could end up sacrificing vital nutrients and not be able to sustain the diet over time. Visit with the physician to determine if carbohydrates should be limited.

Q: Does it matter how many calories I eat as long as I'm maintaining an active lifestyle

A: While physical activity is a vital part of weight control, so is controlling the number of calories you eat. If you consume more calories than you use through normal daily activities and physical activity, you will still gain weight.

References:

Information obtained from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.www.cdc.gov.