

Guess What? Every Calorie Counts

by Alison Lanifero, MS, RD, LDN

Trying to lose weight? Are the low carbohydrate advertisements driving you crazy? There is no magic to weight loss. Imagine calories coming into your body and leaving your body all day long. Let's go back to the very basics of counting calories.

Medical experts do agree, that weight loss comes down to calorie control. You may be counting fat grams or carbohydrate grams, but your body is busy counting calories. If you eat more CALORIES than you burn, you will make yourself gain weight; eating less CALORIES than you burn, will help you lose weight. With more careful attention to exactly what calories are going in and how many are being burned off, you will be on your way to achieving your weight goal.

When losing weight, the goal is to lose body fat, not muscle, water or bone mass, which are also components of your body weight. In order to lose one pound of fat per week, you need to create a deficit of 3500 calories (or 500 calories per day). You should create this deficit with a combination of a reduction in calorie intake and an increase in physical activity. Research shows that the combination will make it more likely for you to keep the weight off.

Our environment makes it very easy for extra calories to creep into our bodies. Portion sizes are constantly growing, high calorie convenience and/ or fast foods are at our fingertips, and activity levels are lower than they should be. Take a look at how easy it is to overeat 500 calories: one 20oz soda, juice or sweet tea= 250 calories; one plain bagel= 400 calories (with cream cheese= 520 calories; one cup of nuts = about 600 calories; one Grande frappachino from Starbucks = 400 calories. Unfortunately, no calorie is innocent. Your body accounts for each and every calorie you consume even if you don't realize it. Many times people forget the handful of jellybeans they scooped up while walking by their co-workers desk (25 calories); the slice of cheese they ate while aimlessly looking in the refrigerator before dinner (80 calories); the extra glass of orange juice they drank (100 calories); the forkful of pasta that their child left on the plate (40 calories). To prevent this phenomenon sometimes referred to as "food amnesia", sit down and think about what you are eating EVERY time you do so, even if it is just a snack. Also, try to keep a food log, which is a record of everything you eat & drink for one week. This will increase your awareness & hold you accountable for every calorie that goes into your mouth.

After all this food talk, maybe you have decided to just burn off the 3500 calories per week. Well, get your sneakers on! Exercise alone requires more work than you may think. For a 150-pound person to burn 500 calories per day, they would have to walk for 90 minutes at about 4 miles per hour or run for 45 minutes at 5.5 miles per hour. You can use this activity calculator to see how many calories your activity burns: <http://www.primusweb.com/fitnesspartner/jumpsite/calculat.htm>. As you can see, burning the 500 calories takes a bit more work than cutting a few calories.

By becoming more aware of everything you eat and drink in the day, you can work toward your weight goal. Start by slowly increasing your activity level and keep a food log for yourself for one week. Skimming off 3500 calories may be easier than you think if you start watching your portions & reducing any mindless eating.

Remember that eating an extra 500 calories per day will put on a pound a week. It may take longer, but even 10 extra calories per day can eventually add up to the 3500. Remember: Every calorie counts.

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