

Understanding Calories:

Your Guide to Staying Healthy

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CALORIES 101

Calories are a measure of energy. To gain weight, you need to consume more energy or calories than you expend, and to lose weight, you need to consume fewer calories than you expend in energy. Maintaining or changing your weight depends on the balance of calories that you eat and drink vs. the calories that you use or burn, through activity and exercise.

There are foods and drinks that have more nutritional value per calorie, proteins and vegetables for example. There are also foods that have almost no nutritional value like pop and sweetened juice. Calories with no nutritional value are sometimes called “empty calories”. So if you want to limit your intake of calories, its best to avoid empty calories.

HOW MANY CALORIES SHOULD I GET?

The number of calories you should consume daily depends on a variety of factors, such as age, gender and activity level. Below you can find the right number of calories for you based on Health Canada's recommendations¹.

Daily Calories for Males:

Age	Sedentary	Low Activity	High Activity
2-3 years	1100	1350	1500
4-5 years	1250	1450	1650
6-7 years	1400	1600	1800
8-9 years	1500	1750	2000
10-11 years	1700	2000	2300
12-13 years	1900	2250	2600
14-16 years	2300	2700	3100
17-18 years	2450	2900	3300
19-30 years	2500	2700	3000
31-50 years	2350	2600	2900
51-70 years	2150	2350	2650
71 years +	2000	2200	2500

Daily Calories for Females:

Age	Sedentary	Low Activity	High Activity
2-3 years	1100	1250	1400
4-5 years	1200	1350	1500
6-7 years	1300	1500	1700
8-9 years	1400	1600	1850
10-11 years	1500	1800	2050
12-13 years	1700	2000	2250
14-16 years	1750	2100	2350
17-18 years	1750	2100	2400
19-30 years	1900	2100	2350
31-50 years	1800	2000	2250
51-70 years	1650	1850	2100
71 years +	1550	1750	2000

¹ http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/basics-base/1_1_1-eng.php

HIDDEN CALORIES:

High-calorie foods are not always obvious. In restaurants and fast food outlets it is especially confusing because the calories are often hidden. Most people can identify that a piece of cake or french fries are

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high in calories, but with some foods it is harder to guess. Many consumers underestimate the calories on restaurant menus because options that seem healthy often pack in lots of calories and salt through sauces, toppings and other ingredients. Here are some common examples of items that are high in calories:

- Soup (specifically cream based soups)
- Sweetened coffee drinks
- Cream based sauces
- Salad dressing
- Muffins
- Bagels
- Alcohol

Developing calorie literacy does not mean that you can never eat a high calorie meal, but rather it is about getting a sense of the calorie counts in your foods and drinks, and making informed choices. It is important to find a balance between high and low calorie items, and understanding where extra calories are hidden will help you do that.

WHAT DOES A CALORIE LOOK LIKE?

Amount of Calories	Healthy Food Equivalent	Less Healthy Food Equivalent
150-200 calories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 tbsp of peanut butter, or • 10 crackers, or • 1 chicken breast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular can of pop, or • 11 ounces of orange juice
200-300 calories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 hard-boiled eggs, or • 4 slices of flax bread 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 M&M's, or • 8 Hershey kisses, or • Boston cream donut
300-400 calories	<p><u>Breakfast</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 whole wheat English muffin, • 2 pats low fat butter, • 1 hard-boiled egg, • ½ cup of fruit, and • 8 oz water <p><u>Lunch</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 large tossed salad, • 2 tablespoons reduced fat oil and vinegar dressing, • 6 oz sliced chicken, and • 12 oz water <p><u>Dinner</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 oz cooked chicken, • 2 tablespoons of bbq sauce, • 1 cup of mixed vegetables, • ½ cup of brown rice, • 1 small tossed salad, and • 2 tablespoons reduced fat oil and vinegar dressing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium order of French Fries, or • ¾ of a large blueberry muffin

If you have any questions about calories or anything you've learned from this document, the OMA recommends that you speak with your doctor for further details.