

BURNING CALORIES

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I get to see a lot of people in my daily practice, some of whom have mastered the art of keeping their weight exactly the same and some who have not done so. Additionally, there are those of us who always want to learn something new about how to pursue the best health and wellness pathway. Along that line, it often finally comes down to calorie-counting as a way to keep track of what's coming in. Often, however, we do not really pay a lot of attention to what is going out except to note that we are "exercising" on a regular basis.

Given the fact that we are all different individuals and have different metabolism, the rules loosely apply to everyone but may vary from person to person. For example, if you eat 1800 calories in a day and do no exercise, you will burn some of these calories keeping your body temperature up (more in colder weather), keeping your brain and your muscles working, and providing metabolic support in your body. However, if the sum total of "burned" calories does not equal the sum total of calories coming in, then some of this can and probably will be stored as fat. The average woman gains about a half a pound a year after the age of 40, and this is sometimes accentuated after the menopause average age of 51.

We know that everyone is looking for the magic pill to either help burn the calories off or to suppress the appetite to such a point that one just doesn't want to eat anymore, but most of you probably realize that this is just not going to happen. The failure rate of appetite suppressants in terms of true weight control is above 90%. Granted, you hear the anecdotal tale of the person who "lost 15 pounds" on this drug or that, and so they are touting this to everyone. Once off the pills, the weight easily returns. However, we also know that in the past few years we have seen deaths reported from taking appetite suppressant medication (e.g. "Fen-Fen"). Suffice it to say that pills and drugs are not a good way to go.

Additionally, we see all of the different physical exercise machines, the steppers, the rowers, the climbers, the pullers, the pushers, the weights, and the spring devices all designed to make you burn calories. The truth of the matter here is that by walking up the steps 60-80 times a day, you can burn a lot of calories and keep your legs in shape. By adding small hand weights when you do, you can build up your upper extremity muscles at the same time. Additionally, when the weather is not inclement, you can walk outside and burn enough calories to make a significant difference.

This brings us to the question of what numbers of calories are present in what foods. If you want to look at a reasonable list, consider the following items: a serving of peanuts: 165 calories; a McDonalds hamburger: 260 calories; 1 serving french fries: 300 calories; an apple: 60 calories; 1 egg: 78 calories; 1 serving spinach: 30 calories; 1 mocha latte

grande: 330 calories; handful of grapes: 56 calories; 1-oz. serving of cheese: 114 calories;.

If you're going to play the game of really getting serious about losing weight, you need to look at the 15 or 20 most common items that you eat in a week and figure out how many calories you get from these. Then, document for a few days every single thing that you eat, not forgetting that chocolate truffle you had just before you went to bed!

After counting calories, look at what it takes to burn off the calories from some of these items. A piece of cake with icing requires 4.8 miles walking to burn those calories. A ham sandwich requires 5.8 miles, and a regular soft drink requires 2.7 miles. Two tablespoons of peanut butter require 7 miles, while an apple only requires 1.5 miles. Twenty-five grapes need 1.2 miles to burn off, and a chocolate bar needs 3.1 miles. Are you getting the picture?

As we have discussed in the past, there are many diet systems available to us. There is the Zone diet, the South Beach diet, the Atkins diet, the LA diet, the Suzanne Sommers diet, the Ornish diet, and so on and so on. What is common to most of these diets is smaller portions, higher nutrient foods, and accountability for calories taken in. Unfortunately, there isn't a really easy way to do this. However, it's possible to retrain your sensitivity to foods and shape and alter your food desires to a moderate extent.

Having mentioned this on multiple occasions in the past I will only give a slight refresher sentence and say that every meal and every snack should be divided evenly between carbohydrates, protein, and fat. Meals should be small and taken only when you are hungry. By sticking to a better rounded diet, you don't hurt your body in the long run and you furnish the nutrients and the protein for body building on a continued basis. If you want to get bad skin, dry hair, or some form of minor malnutrition, go on a diet which only emphasizes one food group or two food groups. Eliminate as many useless calories as you can eliminate every day by simply omitting most of the white foods and sugars. Read labels on boxes of food very carefully because most of these have been altered, devitalized, and high fructose corn syrup and hydrogenated oils have been added for preservation.

If your body were a car, you could simply trade it in when it gets a little "rickety" or doesn't run well. However, we only get one body in our lifetime, and we probably ought to take care of it as best we can. Think about a good diet, counting calories, counting calories burned, and think about how to stay healthfully thinner for the rest of your life.