

## **A CALORIE IS A CALORIE IS A CALORIE... (How Many Calories Should You Eat?)**

**By Trish Schwartz**

“Calories in versus calories out” is the energy equation. To maintain your present body weight, you must take in as much energy as you use up. In other words, the amount of calories you eat in food must balance with the amount of calories your body burns off with physical work as well as your body’s basic energy needs for physiological processes such as digestion, respiration, etc. To lose weight, you must use more calories than you take in whether it is through additional physical activity or cutting down your food intake. Finally, if you eat more calories than you use up, you will gain weight.

Before I go on, let me set a precedent for this article. If you think there is some type of magic to not counting calories, but just counting fat grams, you are just fooling yourself. Eating fat is not the reason for obesity. Eating too much food is the reason for obesity. Limiting the number of fat grams you eat per day is really the same concept as limiting your caloric intake. Fat, at 9 calories per gram of food, is very dense in calories compared to carbohydrates and proteins, which are only 4 calories per gram of food. Therefore, if you are limiting the number of fat grams in a day, you are substantially limiting your calories.

Everyone’s energy requirements are different, depending on your activity level, body structure (bone, muscle and fat composition), body weight, and metabolic rate. Some people naturally burn more or less calories than others because they have a higher or lower metabolism, respectively, but there is a basic formula you can use to determine how many calories you need in a day to maintain your present weight or achieve your “ideal” weight. This formula is not absolute, but serves as a basic guide.

First of all, you need to know how many calories you need for your basic needs (maintaining body mass without activity). An easy, general formula to calculate your caloric requirements is:

1. Convert your body weight in pounds to kilograms. (Body weight in pounds divided by 2.2 to get it in to kilograms).
2. Multiply your body weight in kilograms by 1.0 (if you are a male or a very muscular female) or .9 (if you are a non-muscular female).
3. That will give you the amount of calories per hour you need. Multiply that by 24 hours in the day and you will have the amount of calories you need per day just to be alive--basal needs.
4. You must add additional calories to your basal caloric needs to adjust for your physical activity level.
  - a. Couch potato or sits at a desk all day and does not exercise.....20%
  - b. Someone who does not exercise, but is on their feet all day.....30%
  - c. Moderately active—exercises 3 X week for one hour.....40%
  - d. Very active—exercises 5 – 6 X week for one hour.....50%
  - e. Athlete or hard manual laborer.....60%

EXAMPLE: A 130 pound, moderately active, muscularly built female needs 1975 calories per day to maintain that 130 pounds.

1. 130 lbs. divided by 2.2 = 59 kg. of body weight.
2. 59 X 1.0 = 59 calories per hour.
3. 59 X 24 hrs. = 1418 calories for basal needs.
4. 1418 X .40 (moderate activity level) = 567 extra calories for activity.
5. 1418 calories + 567 = 1975 calories for the day.

There is no magic to losing weight through caloric reduction, however the amount of weight and the speed at which you lose depends on many factors, such as:

1. The amount of **time spent** doing physical work.
2. The **intensity** of your physical activity.
3. The **types** of physical activity you perform.
4. The **frequency** and size of **meals**.
5. The **ratio** (balance) of the food nutrients (carbohydrates, proteins, fats).
6. The amount of liquid you consume for proper **hydration**
7. Your genetic makeup.

Therefore, if you do all the right things, you can be more successful at weight loss and maintenance. The bottom line is that, if you stay physically active and consume an appropriate amount of food calories from healthy food choices, you will be successful in achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight and body fat level. How do you know how many calories you are consuming? No one wants the tedium of counting calories. There is a quick and easy assessment. Use the following chart that gives the average amount of calories in different food groups PER SERVING. Keep track of your food intake by the serving size and estimate how much you have eaten.

<b>Food Group</b>	<b>Calories per serving</b>	<b>Low Fat/Low Calorie Choice</b>	<b>High Fat/High Calorie Choice</b>
Fruit	100	100	100
Vegetable	25 – 75	25	75
Grain	100	100	100
Protein	100-250	100	250
Dairy	100-250	100	250

OTHERS = Condiments, butter, margarines, mayonnaise, salad dressings, etc.

Be sure to include calories from these foods as well.

Butter/margarine = 100 calories per TBS

Mayonnaise/Salad Dressings = 100 calories per TBS (regular fat)

50 calories per TBS (low fat)

25 calories per TBS (non fat)

Jams and Syrups = 50 calories per TBS

**NOTE: Food serving sizes are defined as follows:**

<b>Fruit</b>	¾ Cup juice 1 medium piece of fruit (apple, orange, banana) ¼ Cup dried fruit
<b>Vegetable</b>	½ Cup canned or cooked ¾ Cup juice 1 Cup raw leafy ½ Cup cooked or chopped raw
<b>Grain</b>	1 piece bread 1 Cup flake cereal ½ Cup cooked cereal ½ Cup cooked pasta, rice, legumes 1 tortilla, roll, muffin ½ hamburger bun or English muffin
<b>Protein</b>	2-3 oz. Cooked meat/poultry/fish 2 TBS. Peanut Butter ½ Cup cooked beans 1 Egg 1 Oz. protein powder
<b>Dairy</b>	1 Cup milk 1 Cup yogurt ½ Cup cottage cheese ½ Cup ice cream

**The following is an example of a day's worth of calories for a 1975 total:**

<b>Breakfast:</b>	1 C Cheerios	110
	1 C 1% Milk	100
<b>Snack:</b>	PR Ironman Bar	230
<b>Lunch:</b>	2 Whole Wheat Bread	180
	6 oz. Tuna	150
	1 TBS. Light Mayo	35
	1 TBS. Relish	25
	1 6 oz. Yoplait Yogurt	170
<b>Snack:</b>	Apple	100
	1 String Cheese	100
<b>Dinner:</b>	Chicken Breast (Broiled/skin)	250
	1 Baked Potato (medium)	125
	2 TBS. Butter	200
	1 Cup Corn	150
<b>Snack:</b>	Peach	50
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1975</b>

Counting calories is very tedious and not doable for most people. However, when you are trying to lose weight, it is important that you know how many calories you should be consuming each day and how to estimate your total caloric intake for the day. The easy way to estimate total calories is to follow the "Guide to Estimating Calories" chart. If you know you need to consume 1800 calories a day, look in that column and try to select the number of allowed servings from each food group. Not only will this help you stay close to the number of allowed calories, but it will keep you in a healthy nutrient balance.