

UNDERSTANDING CALORIES: YOUR GUIDE TO STAYING HEALTHY

CALORIES 101

Calories are a measure of energy. Our bodies need this energy to fuel our basic body functions and to participate in physical activity.

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. 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. 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.



FAST FACTS

Calories are a measure of energy

Health Canada recommends daily calorie intake ranges for all ages

High calorie foods are not always obvious

HOW MANY CALORIES SHOULD I GET?

The number of calories you should consume daily depends on a variety of factors, such as:

Age

Gender

Activity level

On average:

Children aged
4 to 12 need about

1500
calories a day

Youth (13 years and older)
need about

2000
calories a day

Adults
need about

2000
calories a day

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 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>Breakfast</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 whole wheat English muffin, • 2 pats low fat butter, • 1 hard-boiled egg, • 1/2 cup fruit, and • 8 oz water <p>Lunch</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>Dinner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 oz cooked chicken, • 2 tablespoons of bbq sauce • 1 cup of mixed vegetables, • 1/2 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 • 3/4 of a large blueberry muffin |

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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.

Sources: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/calories-menus>