

Health

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Calorie Needs for Men

Your calorie requirements vary according to many factors: height, total body weight, ratio of fat to muscle, age, gender, genes, health and physical exercise. However, men can reasonably, and fairly accurately, assess their calorie needs by focusing on two components: basal metabolic rate (BMR) and physical exercise.

Basal Metabolic Rate

Your basal metabolic rate is the minimum number of calories (or energy) needed to power your body's normal functions, like heart beat, respiration and normal body temperature. Your BMR usually accounts for about 60-70 percent of your calorie requirements. Typically, your BMR will peak at the age of 20 and gradually decrease by approximately 2 percent per decade, due in part to inactivity and subsequent loss of muscle tissue. It is very important to note that the more muscle you have, the higher your BMR will be and the more calories you will burn. Muscle is metabolically active tissue and it requires a great deal of energy just to sustain it. So, if you want to lose body fat, make weight lifting a part of your weekly exercise routine.

Exercise

The second major calorie component is physical exercise or activity. The more exercise you do, the more calories you burn.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that the total number of calories burned during any given exercise depends on the intensity of the exercise and the length of time you exercise. For example, low intensity exercise such as walking, gardening, golfing with a power cart, vaccuming and light stretching only burn about 3.5 calories per minute. Moderately intense activity such as bicycling 5-9 mph on fairly level terrain, weight lifting, dancing, carrying your clubs when golfing and scrubbing floors or washing windows burns 3.5-7 calories per minute. And, highly intense exercise like tennis, circuit training, aerobic dance and jogging or swimming laps burns 7 calories per minute. Therefore, to burn a lot of calories, higher intensity activities require less time while lower intensity activities require more time.

How many calories do I need?

If you're searching for the perfect formula to determine your caloric needs, you're likely to find quite a few variations. The Food and Nutrition Board of the National Research Council offers this guide for determining an approximate daily caloric intake needed just to maintain your body weight:

To calculate your calorie needs, determine your daily activity level and multiply your weight times the number of calories per pound indicated:

- Very sedentary (Little or no exercise; “couch potato”): Multiply your weight in pounds by 13
- Sedentary/light exercise (most Americans, office job, light work): Multiply your weight in pounds by 14
- Moderate exercise (weekend recreation): Multiply your weight in pounds by 15.25
- Very active (exercise 3 times per week minimum): Multiply your weight in pounds by 16.5
- Heavy exercise/ competitive athlete (Daily vigorous activity in high energy sport): Multiply your weight in pounds by 18.

Weight Maintenance, Weight Loss, Weight Gain

As noted above, your total daily calorie needs are the calories required to maintain your weight. In order to lose weight, you need to reduce your calorie intake. Calories not only count, they are the bottom line when it comes to fat loss. If you are eating more calories than you expend, you simply will not lose fat, no matter what type of foods or food combinations you eat. Some foods do get stored as fat more easily than others, but always bear in mind that too much of anything, even “healthy food,” will get stored as fat. To take off one pound per week, you'll need to reduce calories by 500 per day (one pound of body fat equals about 3,500 calories), or burn an extra 500 calories in extra exercise. And finally, if you want to gain weight, you obviously need to increase your calorie intake.