

Balance.

AN OVERVIEW

CALORIES

INTRODUCTION

Despite what you might have heard **a calorie is not a little monster that hides in your food and makes you gain weight.**

A calorie is **simply a unit of energy - the energy our body uses to fuel all the body's processes** and any activity we do!

In this material we'll be giving an an overview into what calories are, why they're important for weight management and some simple, practical recommendations to work out how many we need to achieve our goals.



CALORIES & BODY WEIGHT

Our body works on **one very simple principle** when it comes to managing our weight and how we can change it; "Energy in vs. Energy out"

We get energy from our diet in the form of calories.

Carbohydrates have 4 kcals per gram as does **Protein**, and **fat** has 9kcals per gram.

The "**energy out**" component of the equation is the sum of **four main contributors**;

- *Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR)* - how much energy our body uses up at rest
- *Planned Exercise*
- *Thermogenesis* - how much energy are body uses up digesting food
- *Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis (N.E.A.T)* - all other forms of activity we do either subconsciously and or those physical activites we perform that are not sleeping, eating or planned exercise related.



WEIGHT CHANGE & CALORIES

Working out how many calories we need to reach our goal, whether that be weight loss, gain or even maintaining can be difficult and involves some trial and error.

The first step is finding the amount of calories we need to maintain our weight.

This can be done using certain equations and calculators. After that we can add or subtract calories to work towards our goals.

How many calories you should add or subtract (depending on your goals) will depend on a number of factors;

- *Sustainability* - If you can't maintain it for the duration of time required to accomplish the weight change and it leads to binges etc. then you need to reconsider your approach.
- *Time frame* - is this weight change for a certain event and or needs to be done for a certain date?
- *Requirements of competition* - do you need to be a certain weight to be within competition criteria (ties in tie frame).
- Would you prefer to do it *quicker or slower* (considering the advantages and disadvantages of both)?



WEIGHT CHANGE & CALORIES

What comes after this change in calories is incredibly important too.

The initial change won't be effective forever and changes will have to be made. Likewise you couldn't stay in a weight loss/gain phase forever either so need to plan how to finish and what steps to take next after this.

These issues are covered in much more depth in later modules (to do with metabolic adaption, tracking, number manipulation and progressing) but good to be aware of early on!

Calculators

Here's a useful online calculator to help you work out your approximate calorie intake. [Click me!](#)

This is **an approximate figure** and **you will have to monitor** how it effects your body. **Adjust accordingly if you're not getting the results you want** (i.e. if no weight change is occurring after a few days you may need to increase or decrease your calories amount depending on your goals).



WEIGHT CHANGE & CALORIES

Practical Recommendations

There's **never a one size fits all** for these adjustments as it depends on the previously mentioned factors and a bit of "trial and error".

For a **conservative approach** which will allow for most people to achieve a dietary intake to meet their requirements and possibly even incorporate some foods they enjoy / reduce the amount of excess fat gain (as best possible);

+/- 300 - 500 kcals

Or

+/- 5 - 10% of your maintenance

For more extreme deficits we'd recommend working with an experienced coach. There are multiple ways in which these can be accomplished but it's best to do it safely and under the supervision of someone who's done it before (either personal and or with clients successfully).

Additionally, **we wouldn't really recommend extreme surpluses** (unless it was situation which demanded it) as the likelihood is is that you will gain a lot of **unnecessary body fat**.



CALORIE FAQs

So, it's too many calories not too many carbohydrates or fats or protein that make me gain weight?

Correct! Many diets have demonized one of these three macronutrients without covering the fundamentals of weight maintenance first - calorie intake

How do I know how many calories I've had?

We'd advise using a tracker, apps like MyFitnessPal are great!

How many calories in alcohol?

Around 7kcal per gram. We will be covering the link between alcohol and body weight in depth at a later stage!

Does Birth control or my menstrual cycle effect my calorie expenditure?

Yes it does, but we'll be covering this more in depth at a later stage!

What are "empty calories?"

This usually refers to "low-quality foods" example regular coca cola as it has little in the way of nutritious value for the amount of calories you're consuming i.e. no nutritional bang for your calorie buck!



SUMMARY

In summary, calories are not something to keep you up at night nor do they hide in our food and attach themselves to our waistline and or hips everytime we eat something.

They're simple our unit of energy which we use to described the energy required for all the processes which occur all the time across our bodies.

Too many calories will lead to weight gain, too little weight loss and the amount our body needs will lead to weight maintenance - simple!

We need to determine our calorie amount first before anything else if weight change / maintenance is the priority.

The use of calculators to calculate an approximate amount (based on your information and goals) and then food "tracker" applications (MyFitnessPal) to monitor your intake will help immensely and allow you to better achieve your goals!

