

Newsletter

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Calorie Balance and Body Weight

What is Metabolic Rate?

Your metabolic rate governs how much energy your body uses and therefore governs how much food you need to consume. If the quantity of food that you consume is greater than your metabolic requirement, your body will convert the extra food to fat and store it. If there is a deficit, your body will use the stored fat to create the requisite energy. Essentially, most diet advice comes down to reduce your intake and/or up your activity.

From the viewpoint of diet and weight loss, metabolism is the process whereby the body **converts food into energy** (or uses it for bodily repairs) or **stores it as fat** for future use. In simple terms, if we have a faster metabolism we burn calories more efficiently and store less fat. If we have a slower metabolism we burn calories less efficiently and therefore store more calories as fat.

There are four components of metabolic rate. Food, activity or drugs can affect these and some of them can be permanently changed. The most significant component of your metabolic rate is called **basal metabolism**. This is the basic rate of calorie burn that it takes for your body to keep alive. It usually accounts for approximately 60-70% of the total. However, the amount of energy that your body burns even at a resting rate is affected by the amount of muscle mass that you carry. So if you can increase the amount of muscle on your body, you will increase your metabolism.

What Determines Our Metabolic Rate

Several things determine our metabolic rate including:

- **Our Genes;** Some people have a naturally faster metabolism
- **Our Age;** As we age, our calorie needs decrease. On average it drops 2% each decade.
- **Our Muscle-to-Fat Ratio;** Muscle cells are about 8 times more metabolically demanding than fat cells. So the greater the proportion of muscle to fat, the faster our metabolic rate.
- **Our Activity Level;** Exercise burns calories. Even after we stop exercising, the effect continues. So we burn calories at a faster rate for several hours afterwards.
- **How Often We Eat;** Our metabolic rate increases during digestion of food, a process known as the Thermal Effect of food. In simple terms, if we go too long without food (5 hours for men; 3 hours for women) our body thinks there is a food shortage and our metabolism tends to slow down.
- **Our Health & Nutrition;** Metabolism is governed by thousands of separate chemical reactions. To perform this process efficiently, our body needs a constant supply of nutrients. Without these nutrients (like vitamins and minerals, especially vitamins B2, B3, B5, B6 & vitamin C) metabolism can become inefficient and sluggish. The best way to ensure good dietary nutrition is to follow a balanced diet.

Fat-burners, Pills & supplements

There are many so-called 'fat-burning' pills and supplements, which claim to speed up metabolism and weight loss. Be warned! This method of raising your metabolism is not considered safe. Nor has it been proved to assist long term weight loss.

Practical Ways to Raise Metabolism

Take regular exercise

This should be aerobic exercise that makes you breathe more heavily. Exercises that build muscle are also useful.

Eat Breakfast and Eat Regularly

To benefit from the Thermal Effect of food and ensure that your body burns calories willingly, eat breakfast and then eat regularly throughout the day.

Eat a Balanced Diet

This helps to maintain a good supply of nutrients, which in turn keeps your metabolism working smoothly.

Avoid Pills

For the sake of your health and weight, avoid all supplements that claim to offer fat-burning and weight loss benefits.

Foods and Drinks that Raise Metabolic Rate

* Several foods and drinks appear to increase metabolism or metabolic rate, although their over-consumption for weight loss is NOT recommended.

Protein has a higher-than-average thermogenic effect: up to 25 percent of calories may be burned off during 'digestion', as opposed to the usual 10 percent. (Unfortunately, high-protein diets are linked to loss of bone calcium, kidney stress and may encourage consumption of foods high in saturated fat and cholesterol.)

Eating chili and other hot spices also appears to raise metabolism, as it leads to an increased heart rate for up to three hours afterwards.

Caffeine drinks also increase heart rate and metabolism, while **green tea** raises metabolism without also increasing heart rate.

* However, as stated, the over-consumption of these metabolic-booster type foods in order to lose weight is NOT recommended. The side effects are unpredictable and may damage your health.

How to Burn Calories and Lose Weight

Avoid Fat-Burners, Fat-Burning Pills

If you want to burn calories and lose weight, do it naturally! Avoid all amphetamine or metabolic boosters – these diet-supplements won't help you to burn calories or lose weight for long and they can be unhealthy. Instead, partake in physical exercise!

Best Exercise to Burn Calories and Lose Weight

The best exercise for burning calories is cardio-aerobic. Jogging, cycling, power-walking, swimming, aerobic dancing or general aerobic workouts. However, strength-training can be just as important as it increases the muscle-fat ratio.

To Lose 1 Pound Weight – Burn 3,500 Calories

Exercise does burn calories but it takes a while to lose 1 pound of weight! However, exercise is essential to maintain weight loss and maintain your body at peak efficiency.

Burn Calories to Reduce Fat-Muscle Ratio and Lose Weight

Burning calories by exercising helps to reduce your fat-muscle ratio, which helps to increase the rate at which your body burns calories (your metabolic rate). Point is, muscle requires a lot more calories to maintain, so the more muscle you have, the more calories you burn.

Exercise and Burn Calories to Boost Motivation to Lose Weight

Exercising and burning calories is a wonderful way to boost your motivation to lose weight. All studies show that dieters who exercise lose more weight and keep it off when they burn calories by regular exercise.