Calorie Counting Diet

A calorie counting diet requires you to eat the number of calories that are right for you during a day. Calories are the measurement of how much energy you get from the food you eat. Eating the right amount of calories is important for staying at a healthy weight. If you eat too many calories your body will store them as fat and you may gain weight. If you eat too few calories you may lose weight. Counting the number of calories that you eat during a day will help you to know if you're eating the right amount. A Registered Dietitian can determine how many calories you need in a day. The amount of calories you need varies from person to person.

If your goal is to lose weight you will need to eat fewer calories. Losing weight can benefit you if you are overweight or have health problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure or diabetes. If your goal is to gain weight, you will need to eat more calories. Gaining weight may be necessary if you have a certain health problem that causes your body to need more energy.

TIPS

Whether you are increasing or decreasing the number of calories you eat during a day, it may be hard to get used to changing what you eat and drink. The following are tips to help you keep track of the number of calories you are eating.

- Measuring foods at home with measuring cups will help you to know the actual amount of food and number of calories you are eating.
- Restaurants serve food in all different portion sizes. It is common that restaurants will serve food in amounts worth 2 or more serving sizes. While eating out, it may be helpful to estimate how many servings of a food you are given. For example, a serving of cooked rice is 1/2 cup and that is the size of half of a fist. Knowing serving sizes will help you have a better idea of how much food you are eating at restaurants.
- Ask for smaller portion sizes or child-size portions at restaurants.
- Plan to eat half of a meal at a restaurant and take the rest home or share the other half with a friend
- Read food labels for calorie content and serving size
  - Most packaged food has a Nutrition Facts Panel on its side or back. Here you can find out how many servings are in a package, the size of a serving, and the number of calories each serving has.
- The serving size and number of servings per container are listed right below the Nutrition Facts heading. Just below the serving information, the number of calories in each serving is listed.
  - For example, say that a package has three cookies inside. The Nutrition Facts panel says that one serving is one cookie. Below that, it says that there are three servings in the container. The calories section of the Nutrition Facts says there are 90 calories. That means that there are 90 calories in one cookie. If you eat one cookie you have eaten 90 calories. If you eat all three cookies, you have eaten three times that amount, or 270 calories.

The list below tells you how big or small some common portion sizes are.

- 1 ounce (oz).....4 stacked dice.
- 3 oz.....Deck of cards.
- 1 teaspoon (tsp).....Tip of little finger.
- 1 tablespoon (Tbsp)....Tip of thumb.
- 2 Tbsp.....Golf ball.
- ½ Cup.....Half of a fist.
- 1 Cup.....A fist.

KEEP A FOOD LOG

Write down every food item that you eat, how much of the food you eat, and the number of calories in each food that you eat during the day. At the end of the day or throughout the day you can add up the total number of calories you have eaten.

It may help to set up a list like the one below. Find out the calorie information by reading food labels.

- **Breakfast**
  - Bran Flakes (1 cup, 110 calories).
  - Fat free milk (½ cup, 45 calories).
- **Snack**
  - Apple (1 medium, 80 calories).
- **Lunch**
  - Spinach (1 cup, 20 calories).
  - Tomato (½ medium, 20 calories).
  - Chicken breast strips (3 oz, 165 calories).
  - Shredded cheddar cheese (¼ cup, 110 calories).
  - Light Italian dressing (2 Tbsp, 60 calories).
  - Whole wheat bread (1 slice, 80 calories).
  - Tub margarine (1 tsp, 35 calories).
  - Vegetable soup (1 cup, 160 calories).
- **Dinner**
  - Pork chop (3 oz, 190 calories).
  - Brown rice (1 cup, 215 calories).
  - Steamed broccoli (½ cup, 20 calories).
  - Strawberries (1 ¼ cup, 65 calories).
  - Whipped cream (1 Tbsp, 50 calories).

Daily Calorie Total: 1425

Information from www.eatright.org, Foodwise Nutritional Analysis Database.

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