

# How to Determine How Many Calories You Need in a Day

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Whether you're trying to lose weight to lower your blood pressure or just fit into that new swimsuit, understanding how to calculate your caloric needs will help you understand how to meet your weight loss goals. Although there are hundreds of diets designed to help you lose weight, it all comes down to one basic concept: if you eat fewer calories than you need, you will lose weight. Understanding your caloric needs consists of two steps: calculating your basal metabolic rate and

adding your activity factor to it.

Difficulty: Moderate

## Instructions

things you'll need:

- BMR equations (men's and women's)
- Activity multipliers
- Hand calculator

- 1 Calculate your basal metabolic rate (BMR) by using the following equation (for women):  $655 + (4.35 \times \text{weight in pounds}) + (4.7 \times \text{height in inches}) - (4.7 \times \text{age in years})$   
For instance, assuming you're a 130-lb. woman who is 60 inches tall and 35 years old, your BMR would be calculated as follows:  $655 + 565.5 + 282 - 164.5 = 1,338$  calories a day.
- 2 For men, calculate your basal metabolic rate (BMR) by using the following equation:  $66 + (6.23 \times \text{weight in pounds}) + (12.7 \times \text{height in inches}) - (6.8 \times \text{age in years})$   
For instance, assuming you're a 185-lb. man who is 72 inches tall and 40 years old, your BMR would be calculated as follows:  $66 + 1152.55 + 914.4 - 272 = 1,860.95$  calories a day.
- 3 Add your activity level to your basal metabolic rate using the following estimates:  
If you are sedentary (little or no exercise) =  $\text{BMR} \times 1.2$   
If you are lightly active (easy exercise/sports 1 to 3 days/week) =  $\text{BMR} \times 1.375$   
If you are moderately active (moderate exercise/sports 3 to 5 days/week) =  $\text{BMR} \times 1.55$   
If you are very active (hard exercise/sports 6 to 7 days a week) =  $\text{BMR} \times 1.725$   
If you are extremely active (very hard exercise/sports and physical job) =  $\text{BMR} \times 1.9$

4 Calculate your average daily caloric requirement for a woman who is extremely active 6 to 7 days a week, multiply 1,338 by 1.725 = 2,308.05 calories a day.

5 Calculate your average daily caloric requirement for a man who is extremely active 6 to 7 days a week, multiply 1,860.95 by 1.725 = 3,210 calories a day.

## Tips & Warnings

- Be honest about your current weight and activity levels.
- Weigh yourself at the beginning of your weight loss program and record the results.
- Weigh yourself once a week and record your results.
- Consult with a registered dietitian to see if there are ways to reduce your caloric intake.
- Don't fudge the beginning figures. Be honest.
- Work with a [health](#) care professional if you're not seeing the weight loss results you expect.