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The Role of Calories In a Nutritional Program

By Randy Mclean

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As far back as we probably can remember we can all usually recall the word 'calories' when the topic of diet and weight loss is discussed in typical mainstream fitness. For some the word is infamous and generally equated with restriction. For others it is just a byword. This time around we will explore that little word in a little more detail examining its role and also the positives and negatives regarding how they can be used.

First of all, what is a calorie? Without getting too technical, a calorie is a unit of heat. It takes one calorie to raise the temperature of 1 gram of water by 1 degree celsius. Calories are used by our bodies for heat and energy purposes. As I'm sure you are aware of, different foods have different levels of calories. In some cases we take in more of this unit than we need to be used for energy therefore resulting in an caloric overload. Since the body cannot use these calories at that particular time they will be stored in the form of fat.

Now how can this help me you ask? In a lot of ways. Once we understand briefly what calories are and what they are used for we are better suited to come up with ideas and tricks in order to work with them more efficiently.

The main question that people will usually ask when it comes to calories is 'Do I have to count them?' The answer is both positive and negative...yes and no. Let me explain. I will start off with the beginner. Usually someone that is first starting off trying to lose weight will have very poor instinct when it comes to food portions and quantities. For them it would be ideal and very wise to count calories until they at least come to the intermediate and advanced level. It is just like training wheels on a bike. Once you don't need them anymore you take them off.

A lot of commercial diets fail because of this fact. Sure the idea of not counting calories is appealing but in reality that's what resulted in getting the dieter in the mess they're in to begin with. Some diets are more beneficial assigning a point value system to foods and you can look them up making sure you do not exceed this limit. When you look at it they are really just coming up with another way of saying calories. This idea is more appealing but sticks to the golden rule...if you take in less calories than you

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burn you will see success.

For the one who has either met their goals or who have been dieting for awhile I have good news for you. You won't have to spend the rest of your life counting calories! Nobody wants to do that. This is the point where you develop instinct – doing what's right for you. Your metabolism and body type will differ from person to person and nobody will know your own body better than you! Over time and a little trial and error you will be able to just look at a plate and know how much to take or how many meals you can eat during the day based upon what you have taken. This becomes particularly handy when you are eating out. And when you are thinner with more muscle mass your body will already be more efficient at burning calories in the first place.

Counting calories can still be beneficial to advanced people as well but these are usually athletes who

have to make a certain weight or look by a certain time, like wrestlers or bodybuilders for example. You see in the long run that dieting and weight loss when you study it is a science and therefore you have precise units of measurement. And this gets back to the golden rule mentioned earlier. That is why if we take a scientific approach when we are starting out we are more likely to be met with measureable results. You can't argue with science!

Randy Mclean has a diploma in Fitness and Nutrition from Education Direct, a YMCA individual conditioning certificate and is the author of Instinct – Master Your Mind And Your Body! For free tips and tricks visit www.weightlossguidance.com

How To Properly Decipher Deceptive Food Labels

By Dr. Robert Osgoodby

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With today's health conscious consumer, food manufacturers are well aware that a primary concern of the public is health and eating healthy foods. Since marketing plays a huge role in product sales, marketing tactics paint a blurry picture designed to entice you, not educate you.

In an effort to provide the public with what they want, food manufacturers use unclear marketing statements like "Reduced Fat" and "98% Fat Free." Beware of products boasting these types of claims. Just because a product label claims "reduced fat" or "light" doesn't mean it's healthy, or low in fat.

There are several marketing descriptions companies use to coax you to purchase a lower fat version of a product. The best way to protect yourself and not fall prey to misleading marketing

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tactics is to learn how to properly read product labels and interpret common marketing catch phrases.

- * Low Calorie – Fewer than 40 calories per serving.
- * Low Fat – 3 grams of fat or less per serving.
- * Low Cholesterol – 20 milligrams of cholesterol or less per serving, and 2 grams or less of saturated fat per serving.
- * Low Sodium – 140 milligrams or less per serving.
- * Very Low Sodium – 35 milligrams or less per serving.
- * Lean – Less than 10 grams of fat, 4.5 grams of saturated fat, and less than 95 milligrams of cholesterol per serving.
- * Extra Lean – Less than 5 grams of fat, 2 grams of saturated fat, and 95 milligrams of cholesterol per serving.
- * Fat Free – Less than 0.5 grams of fat per serving
- * Light – Half the fat of the regular version
- * Reduced Fat – 25% less fat than the regular version

Whenever you are reading a label, the important things to take into consideration for weight management are:

1. The number of calories per serving
2. The number of servings per container
3. Calories from fat
4. Calories per gram – For instance, whole milk has 9 fat calories per gram, 4 carbohydrate calories per gram, and 4 protein calories per gram.

Milk is probably the number one product that the public has misconceptions about. Regular whole milk is about 50% fat! Out of 150 calories per serving, 70 calories come from fat. Many consumers falsely believe that 1% milk contains only 1% of the fat that whole milk contains. This is just another unsavory advertising tactic. The fact is that in 2% milk, 40% of the calories come from fat, and in 1% milk, 30% of the calories come from fat. Although they are lower in fat than whole milk, by no means are they healthy and low in fat.

Recently, I tried Tuscan's Supreme Milk which is 100% fat free and I have to say, it wasn't bad. It is only 100 calories per serving with 0 calories from fat. It tastes similar to 2% milk while providing you with all of the nutritional benefits of skim milk.

Another thing that can mislead consumers is serving size. Many times you will look at a product believing that the container

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contains one serving, and the caloric and nutritional breakdown are accurate for the entire container. For instance, a can of tuna may state that there are 70 calories per serving, but when you look at the number of servings in the can, it reads approximately two and a half.

By reading labels and understanding the food manufacturers marketing jargon, you can sift through the hype, and make healthy, intelligent food choices. The next time you head to the store to stock up on "healthy foods", don't forget your reading glasses!

Dr. Osgoodby was a finalist in the "EAS Body for Life" Contest. Stop by his web page at bestbodyever.com to see his before and after pictures and subscribe to his monthly newsletter.



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