

WHAT ARE YOU REALLY EATING?

DO CALORIES COUNT?

Should you count calories or can you just count portions? Is it necessary to keep a food journal? Is it unrealistic to count calories for the rest of your life or is this the price for a better body? Trying to count every single calorie will drive you crazy - not to mention robbing you of some of the enjoyment you get from eating! It is certainly not a very realistic goal for the long-term. However, CALORIES DO COUNT! Any diet program that tells you they don't is to be avoided. The law of calorie balance is an unbreakable law of physics: energy in versus energy out dictates whether you will gain, maintain or lose weight. To lose weight you HAVE to consume fewer calories than you burn.

Don't rely on guessing this will end in you either eating more calories than you need or fewer calories than you should triggering your body's starvation mode and causing your metabolism to slow down! So how do you balance practicality and realistic expectations with a nutrition program that gets results? It is important for you to gain an understanding of portion control AND the nutritional content including calories in the foods you eat on a regular basis- and especially in the food you eat when you dine at restaurants.

KEEP A FOOD JOURNAL

Understand your own eating habits. The best way to do this is to keep a detailed journal for a few days so that you can see where your problems lie. You can do this manually by using a paper Food Tracker sheet such as the EFFEX 180 Daily Food Tracker which you can download from our web site. Alternatively you can use an electronic tracker. You can access the Dietitians of Canada EATracker from the EFFEX 180 nutrition page on the right hand column. EATracker assesses your food choices and provides personalized feedback on your total intake of energy (calories) and essential nutrients and compares this to what is recommended for your age, gender, and activity level. This may seem a time consuming exercise but it will give you all kinds of information about you and your eating habits and will payoff! Keeping track of your eating habits can help you determine which habits need breaking and how you can get back on the path to right eating.

USE YOUR FOOD JOURNAL TO

1. Determine if you are eating too much or not enough.
2. Which habits need breaking and how you can get back on the path of eating right?
3. Determine your motivation for eating were you hungry, or were you eating for emotional reasons, i.e. upset, worried, you feel you deserve it or because you are bored?
4. Compare the types of food and portions you eat with the Canada Food Guide. Do you eat well balanced meals with appropriate serving size?
5. Determine your eating habits. Do you eat regularly or do you eat very little and then pig out later? Highlight problem areas and figure out how to solve them.

DEVELOP AN EATING PLAN

Once you have a handle on what and how much you are actually eating and where your problems lay you can develop an eating plan that will work for you. You can create lists of foods (menu plans) that contains the required number of calories to reach your goal and use it as a guideline. This way you only need to count calories to create your menu plans.

MAKE HEALTHY DINING OUT CHOICES

These days eating out is part of life and you don't have to give it up! Healthy food choices are available almost everywhere. You CAN enjoy restaurant meals guilt free - if you order with care. Get informed about your favorite restaurant choices. You may find yourself making different choices. Most restaurants list the nutrition information for their food on the internet.

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

http://www.dietitians.ca/public/content/eat_well_live_well/english/eatracker/

<http://www.capitalhealth.ca/EspeciallyFor/WeightWise/default.htm>