



OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICE
FAMILY & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CONTENTS

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Counting calories remains key to weight control	2
What's up with water?	3
Food-product recalls underscore importance of <i>your</i> role in food safety	4

Counting calories remains key to weight control

It's estimated that 61 percent of Oregon adults are either overweight or obese. The proportion of obese adults has more than doubled in the last 18 years. This can be attributed to eating more calories and getting less physical activity.

We're getting more calories as we eat many of our meals away from home. These meals tend to have larger portions and be higher in calorie and fat content than food prepared at home.

Menu labeling at restaurant chains has been proposed as a way to combat obesity. Calorie counts would be on display. Knowing the number of calories in fast food burgers won't necessarily help you make the healthiest choice, however. You also need to know how many calories you require daily to maintain your weight. Then you can calculate what percentage the hamburger calories are of your daily caloric needs.

Calorie requirements differ depending on your age, gender, and level of physical activity. Go to www.mypyramid.gov to find out how many calories you need. (Click on "Get a personalized plan.") In general, older adults, women, and people who are less physically active need fewer calories.

A woman aged 60 who is physically active less than 30 minutes a day needs 1,600 calories daily. On the other hand, a 31-year-old man who is active more than 60 minutes a day needs 3,000 calories. A 600-calorie burger—such as a beef patty on a large bun with mayonnaise and vegetables—would provide 40 percent of the daily calories for the woman but just 20 percent of those needed by the man. A smaller or plainer burger might be a better choice for the calorie-conscious person.

Some people plan on exercising to burn the extra calories in a meal. However, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans show that can take a lot of time. For example, a 154-pound person burns 280 calories an hour by walking (3.5 miles per hour) or 290 calories an hour by biking (less than 10 miles per hour). At that rate, it would take 2 hours or more to work off the 600 calories in the burger. It would be a little faster with running or jogging (5 miles per hour) at 590 calories per hour or aerobics (480 calories per hour).

Calories do count and should be kept in mind when making food selections. Some restaurant chains provide nutrient information on line. Checking it before eating out can help to keep calories in balance.

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References

Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005, Chapter 3 Weight Management

Oregon Dept. of Human Services, Public Health Division. Senate Bill 931: Task Force for a Comprehensive Obesity Prevention Initiative

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What's up with water?

Did you know that water makes up about 70 percent of the human body? Water plays a vital role in physical health:

- Water is an important part of regulating body temperature: it helps cool you down when you need it most. When your body heats up, water in the surrounding tissues absorbs the heat, which is released through perspiration (sweating).
- Water helps dissolve chemical compounds in the body, and many chemical reactions occur in the water in our body. Water is also a vehicle for moving waste products and toxins from the body.
- Water helps lubricate the eyes, mouth, and nose and the knees and other joints.

Most people can meet their daily hydration needs by letting thirst be their guide, according to the Institute of Medicine. However, it is important to note that the thirst signal is not always reliable. Infants, the elderly, and those who are ill may need to be offered water often.

Not getting enough water leads to progressively uncomfortable sensations: loss of appetite, slowed movement, crankiness and fatigue, nausea, headaches, increased heartbeat, dizziness, and difficulty speaking. Dehydration can be fatal.

Drink water when you feel thirsty. Drink more when you are more active and when the weather is warmer. To help fit fluids in:

- Keep water available and in sight at work and home.
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables throughout the day.
- Watch alcohol and beverages with high amounts of caffeine, such as coffee and some energy drinks—they can contribute to dehydration.

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Reference

Institute of Medicine, Food and Nutrition Board, Dietary Reference Intakes: Water, Potassium, Sodium, Chloride, and Sulfate <http://www.iom.edu/?id=18495&redirect=0>.

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Food-product recalls underscore importance of *your* role in food safety

A recent recall of ground beef products, produced by an Oregon company, is a reminder that thorough cooking is important to kill bacteria. E. coli O157:H7 and other bacteria are in animals' intestinal tracts. Occasionally, the bacteria are spread to the meat. To be safe, cooked ground beef should be brown throughout and have reached an internal temperature of 160 degrees F.

If you're barbecuing, be sure to use a clean plate for cooked patties. Otherwise you could cross-contaminate cooked patties with bacteria that might be on the raw patties. Wash hands and utensils, too.

Cleanliness is important for summer picnics. If running water won't be available, take soap and a jug of water along. Wash hands before preparing food. Wash fruits and vegetables at home or at the picnic site before eating them.

Keep perishable food cold until you're ready to serve it. When possible, put the cooler in the shade. Plan to eat the food soon (preferably within 1 to 2 hours).

Put the food back in the cooler as soon as you finish eating. Do not leave it at warm temperatures longer than 2 or 3 hours. If leftovers can't be kept cold, throw them out.

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