

# Keep Your Metabolism in Check



Your body's metabolism deals with how fast you burn up the calories you take in when you are resting. This depends a great deal on how you manage your diet and how much you exercise. Use the checklist below to keep your metabolism working at its highest potential!

## Healthy Eating

- **Don't starve yourself.** Your body constantly looks out for its own best interest. When you deprive yourself of food, your metabolic rate will automatically drop to save energy. Plainly speaking—you will burn fewer calories and store more fat. As a result, people who diet regularly generally have higher percentages of body fat than those who do not.
- **Eat a good breakfast.** After a good night's sleep, your body has been deprived of food for several hours. You guessed it—your body is trying to conserve energy. This is one of the reasons it is necessary to eat a good, healthy breakfast. Try to avoid sugary or fatty foods for your first meal of the day so your body can spend energy instead of generating fat.
- **Eat two more meals.** After breakfast, it is a good idea to eat a sensible lunch and supper to keep your metabolic rate at its highest levels. Occasional healthy snacking is okay, too. Keep in mind that frequent snacking between large meals will lower your metabolism and cause your body to store fat instead of burn it.

- **Eat healthy foods.** Your body can very easily turn the fat you eat into body fat, but it is harder for your body to turn the carbohydrates you eat into body fat. You can see a real difference in body fat by making sure that only 30 percent of the calories you eat come from fat.
- **Resist cravings.** Let's face it—sometimes we just need a sweet snack. Sugar is a high-energy source, but your body can quickly turn it into fat. Women especially crave sugars between ovulation and menstruation, since there is a natural rise in metabolism. Try to eat fruit or another healthy snack instead. This will cause your body to burn stored fat for energy.
- **Avoid alcohol and smoking.** Both of these inhibit the burning of abdominal fat. That is why drinkers and smokers tend to be bigger around the waist than abstainers.

## Exercise

- **Just move it!** Physical activity increases your metabolism in two ways. First, movement causes your body to burn energy in the form of calories during exercise. Second, as you exercise, you increase the amount of muscle that you have, and your body will burn more fat—even at rest—to meet the metabolic needs of all that high-energy muscle.
- **Exercise many muscles.** Choose high-energy exercise, like walking, bicycling, swimming, cross-country skiing, or aerobics to give both arms and legs a good workout. By exercising more muscles, you will burn more energy.

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- **Exercise 30 minutes or more.** It takes at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise to burn more calories than your body can replace by eating. This means that, after 30 minutes of exercise, your body will begin to burn stored fat for energy. Examples of exercise include walking, bowling, and gardening.
- **Vary your workout.** Over time, your body will not have to work as hard to do the same exercise. This will cause you to burn fewer calories. Try to change your routine every 6 weeks. For instance, you might alternate gym workouts with outdoor activities. You'll burn more energy, and you won't be as likely to get bored!

## Resources

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Distributed by David Buys, PhD, MSPH, Extension State Health Specialist, Food Science, Nutrition, and Health Promotion. Written by Melanie C. Pollan, MS, and Maci P. Flautt, MS, former Extension Associates, Family & Consumer Sciences.



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