

## A Little About Calories

The number of calories you should consume each day depends on several things:

- Your gender
- Your age
- Your activity level
- Your metabolism
- Your current weight
- Your goal weight

The more muscle mass you have, the more calories you will burn. That's one reason men typically need more calories than women, younger people need more than older people and active people need more than sedentary people.

The older you get, the more muscle you lose. Beginning at age 45, the average person loses about 10 percent of his or her muscle mass every 10 years. Fat, which burns fewer calories than muscle, replaces the muscle tissue. Combine that with a slowing metabolism (rate at which you burn calories) and you can see why the older you get, the fewer calories your body needs to maintain your current weight, and if you continue to consume the same number of calories, you will gain weight. The good news is that exercise can help you increase your muscle mass and your metabolism, both of which can help you burn fat and lose weight.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Dietary Guidelines for Americans outlines the following three activity levels.

- **Sedentary** – Light physical activity associated with typical daily life
- **Moderately active** – Physical activity equivalent to walking 1.5 to 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour or 30 to 60 minutes of moderate physical activity per day in addition to daily activities
- **Active** – 60 or more minutes of moderate physical activity per day in addition to daily activities

To help you decide how many calories you should be getting you must determine which of these categories most closely matches your current level of activity.

## Calculate Your Caloric Needs

**Step 1** – Use this formula, known as the Harris-Benedict principle, to assess your basal metabolic rate (BMR), which is the amount of calories you need while at rest:

- Women –  $655 + (4.3 \times \text{weight in pounds}) + (4.7 \times \text{height in inches}) - (4.7 \times \text{age in years})$
- Men –  $66 + (6.3 \times \text{weight in pounds}) + (12.9 \times \text{height in inches}) - (6.8 \times \text{age in years})$

**Step 1** – Adjust for activity:

- If you're bedbound – Take your BMR (from above) x 1.2
- If you're sedentary – Take your BMR x 1.4
- If you're moderately active – Take your BMR x 1.5
- If you're active – Take your BMR x 1.6

The resulting number is your targeted calorie intake to maintain your current weight. To lose weight, you can burn more calories (through increased activity), eat fewer calories or **BOTH**.