



Calories Explained

Calories can be either really complicated or fairly easy to understand, depending on how much you want to know. The basic rule of weight loss is that you need to burn off more calories than you consume – simple eh? 😊

What's a calorie?

The amount of energy in food and drinks is measured in calories. Our bodies need energy, and we all need to eat food and stay hydrated to live, work and play.

The term "calorie" is technically defined as the amount of energy needed to raise the temperature of 1 gram of water by 1 degree Celsius. However, when most people refer to calories, they are actually talking about the amount of energy in everything we eat and drink, but these are actually kilogram calories or kilocalories (kcal), a unit that equals 1,000 calories.

The kcal is the most suitable unit of measurement for food and beverages because there is a large amount of energy stored in their molecules. After all, it is easier to say that one medium banana contains 105 kcal rather than being more exact and saying that it contains 105,000 cal. So for the purposes of this training plan when we talk about calories, we mean kcal.

Nearly everything we consume has a calorie count, and those calories come from three energy sources—carbohydrates, proteins and fats.

Macronutrient Calories per Gram:

- **Carbohydrates:** 4 calories per gram
- **Fats:** 9 calories per gram
- **Protein:** 4 calories per gram

Why count calories?

Simply put, when we eat and drink more calories than we use, our bodies store the excess as body fat. If this continues, over time we may put on weight. Knowing the calorie content of food and drink will help to monitor your daily intake.

You need to burn 3,500 calories to lose 1lb of fat. That may sound like a lot, but if you think of it over a long period of time it's not really.

The NHS suggests that healthy weight loss is around 1-2lbs a week, so in order to lose 1lb of fat in a week, you would need to **burn 500 calories a day** more than you eat and to lose 2lbs in a week, you would need to burn 1000 calories a day more than you eat. Make sense?



How do we use this information to help us lose weight?



Now we know that to lose 1lb in body weight, we need to consume 3,500 calories less than we use, we can start to build a plan:

- A female adult of average height and weight needs to consume around 1,900 calories a day to maintain their current weight, so to lose 1lb a week, they would need to reduce this to 1,400 calories per day.
- A male adult of average height and weight needs to consume around 2,400 calories a day to maintain their current weight, so to lose 1lb a week, they would need to reduce this to 1,900 calories a day.

Let's consider some popular food and snacks:

- *Walkers crisps - 132 cal*
- *Can of Pepsi -150 cal*
- *M&S Cheese & Onion sandwich - 497 cal*
- *Snickers chocolate bar - 213 cal*
- *McDonalds Big Mac - 508 cal*
- *1 cup of cooked rice - 216 cal*
- *100g wholegrain rice - 168 cal*
- *1 cup of broccoli - 31 cal*
- *1 cup of carrots - 52 cal*
- *1 cup of cauliflower - 25 cal*

Now let's compare that to the number of calories an adult female weighing 140lbs (10 st) would lose doing 1 hour of various exercise:

- *Moderate cycling - 381 cal*
- *Jogging - 535 cal*
- *Rowing - 445 cal*
- *Iceskating - 445 cal*
- *Playing squash - 762 cal*
- *Walking at a brisk pace - 241 cal*
- *Outdoor bootcamp session - 400 cal*

It's easy to see how you can hit the 500 calories a day by possibly making a few changes to your current lifestyle. You can also see the difference between something like 1 cup of cauliflower (25cal) compared to one cup of rice (216cal).

Now imagine using grated cauliflower instead of rice with a chicken curry? You could save yourself over 200 calories in one meal straight away! 😊



Grated cauliflower is exactly how it sounds. Get some fresh or defrosted cauliflower and literally grate it using a cheese grater until it resembles rice. Not only does it 'look' like rice, it 'feels' like rice in your mouth as well.



If you have never tried this, give it a go - honestly! Cauliflower is my go to tip for everyone, and is one of the rare 'white' foods which is actually good for you. You can use it to replace rice as suggested above, or to replace mash potato on a cottage or shepherds pie maybe, the options are endless.....

You can also see by these lists, that if you are prone to the occasional bag of crisps or snickers bar, and don't currently exercise then by adding in one hour of cycling and not having the snickers bar, you will have hit just over 500 calories already.

It's important to note however that not all calories are equal. Some foods contain considerably more nutrients and vitamins than others, so although simply reducing your calorie intake or increasing your energy expenditure will result in fat loss, you need to also make sure that you are putting the right 'type' of food into your body.

You could for instance live off of McDonalds for a month (*like Morgan Spurlock did as an experiment in the film 'Super-Size Me'*). If, during this time you do a lot of exercise (*and I mean **a lot***) you could still potentially lose some weight, but the process of doing so would cause you no end of health-related issues due to the amount of saturated fat and salt you have been consuming. What a thought!!

So, a healthy balance is looking at the type of foods you eat, see how much of these hit the recommended daily levels of carbohydrates, protein and healthy fats and then add some exercise in as well to help you reach a calorie deficit. Planning this in over a period of weeks to hit the weight loss goal you are looking for will make it easier to achieve and also help with maintaining your weight afterwards as well. 😊👍