

## Why Calorie Counting Doesn't Work and How to Succeed Without It

Calorie counting sounds so simple as a weight loss strategy: you eat fewer calories than you need and you lose weight. It would seem that all you have to do is work out how many calories you need and add up the calories in everything you eat, then make sure that you don't eat too many. But what sounds so simple in theory is mind-boggling difficult and tedious to do in real life unless you have no social life and constantly eat the same few food items and recipes or live on ready meals. Try finding a decent restaurant which provides the calories on each of its menu items. Or how about insisting that your friend works out the calories in the meal she is cooking for her dinner party. Weighing every food item and calculating the calories in everything you eat takes time. As a result the tendency is to start estimating weights and calorific values. And surprise, surprise scientific studies have shown that we tend to underestimate the amount of food and the number of calories we are consuming. So you think you are eating fewer calories than you need but you'll still not lose any weight (or as much as you thought you would). If, unlike most of us, you are quite a detailed person, you might quite like the idea of calorie counting. It might very well work for you, but take care because I have also found that quite a few people, who find the method working, start getting obsessive about food and the calories it contains which is far from the happy, relaxed and healthy approach to eating that you want to adopt. So how do you make weight loss work without calorie counting?

1. Maintain Calorie Awareness Even if you don't count calories there's no need to ignore calories altogether. Calories are often a useful indicator for whether a food is worth eating ("700 calories for that chocolate cake - really? - I think I'll pass") So it's useful to give a passing glance to food packaging and to have a general idea of where you can cut back to help in your weight loss efforts.
2. Choose Food Wisely Choose food based on nutrition and health and eat it in modest portions. The calories will even themselves out overall if you do this for the majority of your meals especially if you fill half your plate with salad or vegetables and eat small portions of the more calorie dense protein and carbohydrate foods.
3. Make Some Foods a Rare Event Avoid regularly eating foods which you know are high in calories and which really do nothing for your health. In this category I would put chocolate, candy, fast food, deep fried and breaded foods, cakes, cookies and pastry. There's no harm in having them occasionally - certainly don't ban them or you'll set yourself up for a craving. Simply choose your meals keeping health and nutrition in mind and you'll be fine.
4. Eat Often Eat a healthy breakfast, lunch and dinner and have a healthy snack mid-morning and mid-afternoon to keep your metabolism fired up and prevent yourself getting over-hungry and raiding the vending machine for chocolate.
5. Don't Drink Your Calories Make most drinks water or herbal tea. It's estimated that about 20% of our calories are consumed as drinks which don't fill us up! For that reason avoid drinking sweetened soda, fruit juice (no matter how healthy it sounds), milky drinks and alcohol on a regular basis.

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### About the Author

Exchange of scientific information in the nutritional sciences. A place to reach out for food and nutrition.

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