

Calories Count, Even if You Don't Count Them!



Most Americans don't count calories, even though they are concerned with their weight. Only 9% can do so accurately and again only about 9% keep track of the calories they eat in a day. Why? Reasons range from, "it's hard" to "it's boring". Have you ever noticed that reading the labels requires a PhD in mathematics? At least that is how it seems when you read such things as "3.75 servings/container".

When it comes to deciding which foods and beverages to buy, do you consider your priorities in this order: taste, price, healthfulness? Most Americans do. However, just like you consider the price of something before purchase, you might consider the calories in a food before you eat it. Can you afford it? It is further helpful to consider, "does this food have the nutrients needed to contribute to health?" Nutritionists call this nutrient density.

Simple substitutions can cut loads of calories over time. Examples that make a huge difference in a week's time is using 1% milk instead of 2%, eating a piece of fruit rather than an 8 ounce juice, ordering a small instead of a super-size in most items you order out. These strategies can become lifetime habits supporting weight maintenance.

Factors such as package, portion and plate size influence consumption of excess calories by inhibiting calorie monitoring and suggesting alternative (larger) consumption norms. Consumers face these issues when dining out and visiting grocery stores. Perhaps redirecting our focus to the *psychological mechanisms* behind consumption, could raise awareness of how much the eating environment influences our weight. Research has shown us that small structural changes in personal environments can reduce the unknowing over-consumption of food.



Even though 70% of Americans say they are concerned about their weight, the majority resist counting calories. Yet, research shows that people who keep track of calories lose twice as much weight as those who don't. Is it time to start counting? You will be surprised how much counting, and maybe even logging, helps you resist temptation of overindulgence.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size	½ cup (114g)
Servings Per Container	4
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	90
	Calories from Fat 30

Eat Smart Program-Missoula City-County Health Department
 Questions or comments? Contact Rebecca Morley, MA
 (406)258-3827 www.co.missoula.mt.us/HealthServices/EatSmart
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1,897 and
still counting!



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