

Why Calorie Counting is a Bad Idea

Calorie counting is an “educated guess”, at best. Don’t believe anyone who tells you otherwise unless that person is sitting in a lab somewhere and doing tests to measure calories. This doesn’t mean you ignore food quantity completely and eat as much as you want. Think of calories as fuel. A car or bike needs fuel to perform. Your body needs fuel too. Even if you sleep 24 hours in a day, you need fuel for the heart to pump blood or for your food to digest. The more you move, the more fuel you need. The bigger you are, the more fuel you need.

Most of us have some goal with respect to fitness and nutrition – this could be strength gain, fat loss or just general health and well-being. Based on your goal, your fuel requirements change. This means, the amount of food you need to eat every day changes.

This is also based on physical characteristics such as bodyweight and muscle mass. Let’s say the amount of fuel you need is X. Now, everything you eat and drink (except water) will supply fuel to your body. If fuel supplied and fuel burnt are approximately the same, you are in balance. Else, you are in deficit or in excess.

For a better chance at achieving your goal, you need an “educated guess” of fuel requirements in terms of food and not numbers. For example, you may need to eat A cups of rice, B cups of veggies and C cups of protein based foods to achieve your goal. Your coach or any other qualified professional should be able to tell you what these amounts should be for you.

You should obviously try and eat these quantities every day. But wait, life happens. You will have good days and bad days where the amount you eat and the amount you move will change. As long as you are hitting the right amounts 80 to 90% of the time, you will progress towards your goal. Obviously, your best chance at progress is to be at 100% and if you are perfect enough to do that, go for it.

Remember, you are going to eat almost every day for the rest of your life. Your plate has foods with taste and flavor and not calories. Every day and with every meal, you have a chance to eat the right foods and at the right quantities. Use that chance as well as life permits you to. Results and everything else will follow.