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08/18/2012

Know Your Metabolism By Kent Pegg

One of the key factors to weight loss and weight management is your metabolism. Metabolism is a term that refers to how your body transforms the calories in the food you eat into energy. The food is broken down into sugars and amino acids that the body then has available for use as energy. The energy is then either used or it is stored as muscle or fat.

If you want to lose weight and keep the weight off, one important thing to do is to know your metabolic rate. Your metabolic rate is the number of calories your body burns in the course of a day.

To accurately determine your metabolic rate, sophisticated test equipment is required. The test is performed by breathing into a mouthpiece connected to the testing equipment.

The testing machine measures the amount of oxygen utilized by the body and then converts that to a number of calories your body burns at rest for 24 hours. Based on your resting metabolic rate (RMR), the equipment then calculates the number of calories burned through normal activity and by exercise, giving you the total number of calories your body consumes in a day.

Los Alamos Fitness Center has recently purchased testing equipment that will tell you precisely how many calories your body burns. For more information on the testing or to schedule an appointment for a test, call us at 662-5232.

Accurately assessing your metabolic rate is essential for weight loss or weight maintenance. Generic formulas that predict your metabolic rate based on your height, weight, and age are extremely inaccurate. They do not take into account genetics, diet, or a person's muscle/fat ratio.

For example, the formula prediction for my body was off by over 77% compared to the actual test result. That means that my predicted calorie intake was over 1800 calories lower than my actual needs. Eating to the formula predicted number of calories would cause me to lose over 16 pounds per month and put me under 100 pounds by the end of the year!

Truly knowing your metabolism frees you from traditional restrictive diets and allows you to eat for your own body's needs. If you know your body burns 2500 calories per day and you want to lose one pound per week simply reduce your daily intake to 2000 calories. It's that easy.

An important key to either increasing your metabolism or keeping it high is to have a large amount of lean muscle mass. Lean muscle mass burns calories all day long, whether we're active or resting. A person who has more muscle mass will have a faster metabolism and burn more calories than a person who has less muscle.



The best way to build lean muscle mass is to weight train. Focus on a balanced program that effectively works all muscle groups. If you're new to weight lifting, get some advice from a trained professional and then get going. Start with simple exercises and light weights and then increase the weights as your strength increases.

Many times when a person is trying to lose weight they significantly reduce their caloric intake in an effort to lose the weight quickly. This actually works against you in your quest for weight loss. If you don't consume enough food, your body will go into starvation mode. That's where your body slows its metabolism and begins to store excess energy as fat.

Eating meals throughout the day will help to ensure that your body is keeping up with its energy needs and keep your metabolism high. Some foods that help increase your metabolism include high fiber fruits and vegetables, low fat meats, nuts, and complex carbohydrates. Drinking adequate amounts of water will also help speed your metabolism.

So whether you're trying to lose weight or maintain a healthy weight, knowing your metabolism will go a long way toward helping you achieve your goals. The right information, combined with proper nutrition, hydration, and weight training will get your metabolism fired up in no time.

Fit Bits on Metabolic Rate!

- *Muscle is the single biggest determinant of resting metabolic rate*
- *Going on a diet without exercise can decrease RMR by 20%*
- *Starting at the age of 20, the RMR drops 2-3% per decade largely as a result of loss in muscle mass*

Kent Pegg is a certified personal trainer and the owner of the Los Alamos Fitness Center. If you have any questions about the information in this article or would like to schedule a metabolic rate test you can call him at 662-5232.

