

Calories Count: the weight loss basics



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Are you looking for a way to shed those holiday pounds?

If your new year's resolutions include losing the extra weight, then put away your book on the latest diet gimmick and start reading food labels. Forget the latest fads (they never work); the secret to weight loss is to eat fewer calories than your body burns.

Calories are a measure of energy, and when you consume more calories than you use, you store them as fat. Conversely, when you use more energy than you consume, your body pulls energy from those calories, previously stored as fat and burns them. By paying attention to portion sizes and calories consumed, you can turn your body into a fat burning machine each day.

One pound of fat is equal to 3,500 calories, meaning for every 3,500 "extra" calories that you burn, you will lose one pound of fat. By cutting your caloric intake by 500 calories per day, you will set your body on pace to burn 1-pound of fat per week. In an "instant gratification" society, this doesn't seem like much, but how would you feel if you were 52 pounds lighter by next year.

Cutting those 500 calories each day can be as simple as giving up your morning latte, eliminating regular soda, or cutting out your late evening snack. Also consider making lower calorie choices, such as skim milk, low-fat yogurt, or light cheese. Finally, don't forget about keeping your diet balanced with lean proteins, complex carbohydrates, and unsaturated fats...and make sure to get your fruits and vegetables.