

# The York University Staff Association Health and Wellness News and Views

Ever wonder why your best friend can go through a pint of ice cream without gaining a single pound while just one spoonful goes straight to your thighs? The answer lies in your metabolism, that little engine in your body that burns calories all day long. Every function of every organ in our body relies on energy. Energy comes from the metabolism of calories. Metabolism is the term used when referring to the speed in which the body breaks food down and then makes use of the nutrients. How much energy the body needs depends on what the body is doing. Some people only need 1500 calories per day, while athletes may need well over 3000 calories per day. The (BMR) Basic Metabolism Rate refers to the minimal amount of calories you need to live. While genetics counts for part of your metabolic efficiency, you can give your metabolism a kick in the pants by simply cranking up your calorie blasting ways with these quick tricks.

There are a wide variety of foods that have the ability to boost your metabolism.

**Hot peppers.** Jalapeno, cayenne, habanero, etc. Instantly boost metabolism and circulation. In fact, eating hot peppers not only speeds up your metabolism, it also reduces food cravings. If you've ever experienced a bout of intense sweating after eating a particularly hot pepper it's a good thing! In fact, studies have shown that eating hot peppers can boost the metabolism by up to 25%, with the spike lasting for up to 3 hours. So order the extra hot salsa next time you have a craving.



**Whole Grains.** Individuals who opt for the whole grain cereal first thing in the A.M. burn more Fat during the day than those who eat more quickly digested foods, such as bagels or white breads. Whole grains are chock-full of nutrients and complex carbohydrates that speed up metabolism by stabilizing our insulin levels. Slow-release carbs, such as oatmeal, brown pasta and rice stabilize our insulin levels so we are less likely to experience spikes in our blood sugar associated with sugar rich foods.

**Protein.** Studies show that Individuals who obtained 40% of their daily calories from protein lost significantly more body fat than those whose diets contained only 15% protein, even though they consumed the same amount of calories. When eating protein the body burns more calories in the digestion process alone than compared to carbs or sugars. Therefore you feel fuller – longer. I suggest having one serving of protein in every meal and snack.

**Dairy.** Getting plenty of dairy can help rev up your metabolism. Low fat dairy is high in the essential calcium needed for fat burning and weight loss. In addition, it is high in nutrients and great for a healthy digestive tract.

There are 2 drinks to remember when you want to boost your metabolism.

**Water.** Many of us underestimate the power of water. Water is essential to keeping our bodies hydrated. Even the slightest dehydration can slow down our metabolism. In addition to its effect on your metabolic rate, sipping cold water throughout the day may cause you to eat less because your body cannot distinguish hunger from thirst. Rather than reaching for a snack, try a satisfying glass of ice cold water.



**Green Tea.** It contains caffeine and antioxidant compounds that are effective in increasing your metabolism. Green tea and green tea extracts boost your metabolism by stimulating your sympathetic nervous system and improving insulin sensitivity.

**Supplements.** While you should always make good food choices and get plenty of exercise, some may still wish to take additional supplements to help their metabolism. There are literally hundreds of metabolism boosting supplements available. The best way to find the best metabolism boosting supplement for you is to do the research and try a few. There are lots of forums and websites full of reviews and testimonials on various supplements. You can also go to specific health food stores and ask a trained professional to help you make an informed decision.

**Exercise.** Being active is pivotal in boosting the metabolic rate dramatically. Increases in heart rate prompt the body to burn more energy. Circuit training has proven to be a very effective metabolism booster. Instead of resting between resistance training sets, move straight from one exercise to another, keeping your heart rate up. Weight training alone increases your resting metabolic rate by at least 7%. So you will burn more calories throughout the day, even while doing nothing ☺ Exercise burns additional calories directly following the workout session also, which is known as the after-burn affect. This effect can last 24-48 hours. Finally, exercise increases calorie-burning lean muscle mass. One pound of muscle burns an extra 50 calories a day. Aim for 40 minutes, 4 times a

week with a combination of both cardio and resistance training.

The Goal is to have the calories that you eat match the calories that you burn to avoid being stored as fat. Knowing your metabolic threshold can help you figure out how many calories you need to exercise and keep your energy needs in balance, and your body at an ideal healthy weight. Unless you have access to a calorimeter that accurately measures your BMR, you will have to estimate your own energy requirements. However by incorporating some of these metabolism boosting strategies you will be well on your way.

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