

Estimating your Daily Calorie Requirements

The Harris-Benedict equation is often used to estimate your calorie needs.

Keep in mind that people are unique and their physiology will vary. This is just an estimate. However, it provides a good beginning for understanding your calorie needs.

Here is the Harris-Benedict equation for men and women:

Men (metric) $BMR = 66.5 + (13.75 \times \text{weight in kg}) + (5.003 \times \text{height in cm}) - (6.755 \times \text{age in years})$

Men (imperial) $BMR = 66 + (6.2 \times \text{weight in pounds}) + (12.7 \times \text{height in inches}) - (6.76 \times \text{age in years})$

Women (metric) $BMR = 655.1 + (9.563 \times \text{weight in kg}) + (1.850 \times \text{height in cm}) - (4.676 \times \text{age in years})$

Women (imperial) $BMR = 655 + (4.35 \times \text{weight in pounds}) + (4.7 \times \text{height in inches}) - (4.7 \times \text{age in years})$

You just need to plug in your age, height, and weight. The number you get is the total number of calories you need each day to exist (also known as your basal metabolic rate, BMR). For example, a 58-year-old woman who is 5' 8" and weighs 150 pounds has a basal metabolic rate of 1355 calories.

Since you do not sit still all day, you'll burn more calories than your BMR. To get an estimate of how many calories you burn each day, you can use the "activity factors" listed below.

- Sedentary: Minimum of movement, much time spent TV watching, reading, etc.
Activity factor = 1.4
- Light activity: Office work, ~1 hour of moderate exercise/activity during the day.
Activity factor = 1.5
- Moderate activity: Light physical/manual labor during the day, plus more active lifestyle. Activity factor = 1.6
- Very Active: Active military, full time athlete, hard physical/manual labor job.
Activity factor = 1.9

Choose the factor that fits your lifestyle and multiply it by your BMR. For the example we cited above, if we choose the most common activity factor of 1.5 and multiply that by 1355 calories, we get 2033 calories. This number is the total caloric needs, or approximately the amount of calories that person needs to eat each day to maintain her weight. To lose weight, she would need to eat less than this. To gain weight, she would need to eat more.