

The Calorie Truth

It seems to me that the importance of the calorie is being emphasised more and more when it comes to the subject of fat loss. This encourages people to monitor their diet and therefore take their health more seriously which is certainly good news. The simple fact is that the common view of "calories in versus calories out" dictating whether you are going to lose or gain fat is overly simplistic and not completely accurate. I appreciate this may challenge deeply engrained beliefs that a lot of people (including nutritionists) have, so I fully intend to explain why.

Different macronutrients (proteins, carbohydrates and fats) have different effects on the body - obviously. The 'thermic effect of food' (TEF) is the increase in your metabolic rate when digesting and utilising food. The thermic effect of protein is a lot higher than it is for both carbohydrates and fats. This means that eating foods rich in proteins is going to raise your metabolism to a higher degree than it would if you ate either of the other two macronutrients. So it is evident that 3000k/cal from protein consumption is going to raise your metabolism more than 3000k/cal from carbohydrates (or fats) and the consequential increase means you will expend more calories digesting the protein.

Another massively overlooked factor when it comes to calories is the specific hormonal response that happens with certain foods. For example, numerous studies have proven that insulin (a hormone secreted by the pancreas) inhibits fat loss. Failure to monitor your blood sugar levels can result in fat storage around the suprailiac (the hips or so-called 'love-handles') and insulin is a hormone primarily dictated by carbohydrate consumption (amongst a lot of other factors such as irregular eating patterns).

If a calorie is simply a calorie and that is all there is to it then 2500k/cal in the consumption of chips would result in the same rate of fat loss/storage as 2500k/cal in the form of chicken.

There are several ways of monitoring your blood sugar levels including inexpensive blood glucometers. All people react to foods differently and therefore you will need different food intakes to the person next to you. When it comes to dietary starting points I like to use the concept of metabolic typing. It's main focus is choosing foods which will react well with your body and regulate your insulin levels which will result in a faster rate of fat loss and a healthier you in general.