



Know your numbers: calorie counts differ

Where can I find out how many calories a day I should be eating? I recently started paying attention to calorie intake, and have been using the 2,000-calorie-a-day standard on Nutrition Facts labels. But 2,000 calories a day can't be right for everyone.

You are absolutely correct. Actually, there are 12 recommended calorie levels, ranging from 1,000 calories a day (for 2-year-old children and "sedentary" 3-year-olds) up to 3,200 calories a day (for active teenage boys, ages 16-18). Calorie recommendations depend on a person's age, sex and activity level. Recommendations for adults range from 1,600-2,400 calories a day for women and 2,000-3,000 calories a day for men.

You can find where you land on the guidelines by going to <http://www.mypyramid.gov>, and clicking on "Get a personalized plan." Or you can get a chart listing all of the calorie intake recommendations by clicking on "For Professional Use" and downloading "Food Intake Pattern Calorie Levels."

You're not alone in being confused about how many calories you need. The "2009 Food and Health Survey: Consumer Attitudes toward Food, Nutrition, and Health," conducted by the International Food Information Council (IFIC) Foundation, found that only 11 percent of respondents

estimated correctly. A whopping 47 percent overestimated the number of calories they need; 16 percent underestimated; and 26 percent simply responded that they didn't know.

Of course, calories aren't the only measure of a healthful diet. Dietitians recommend a well-balanced diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy, with a reasonable amount of lean protein and healthful fats. The IFIC survey also asked about knowledge of different fats, and 69 percent of respondents said they are concerned with the type of fat they consume, particularly that they are trying to reduce the amount of trans fat in their diet. Still, respondents' understanding of healthful fats, such as monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, still appears low.

Using the Nutrition Facts panel appears to be helpful to consumers. Nearly 70 percent of the 1,064 respondents said they use the panel for some type of nutrition information, with calories getting the most attention, followed by total fat, sugars, trans fat, sodium, saturated fat, serving size and calories from fat. But MyPyramid is seldom used; while 84 percent of the respondents said they are aware of MyPyramid, only 25 percent have ever used it. Log onto <http://www.mypyramid.gov> today, and you'll find loads of helpful, healthful information.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

**For the week of
August 16, 2009**

By Martha Filipic
(614) 292-9833
filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu

Editor:
This column was reviewed by Julie Shertzer, registered dietitian and program specialist for Ohio State University Extension in the Department of Human Nutrition, in the College of Education and Human Ecology.

**Section of Communications
and Technology
News and Media Relations**
2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1044
(614) 292-2011

208 Research Services
Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
(330) 263-3780

Ohio State University Extension embraces human diversity and is committed to ensuring that all research and related educational programs are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or veteran status. This statement is in accordance with United States Civil Rights Laws and the USDA. Keith L. Smith, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Agricultural Administration and Director, Ohio State University Extension
TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868