



## Balance your calorie checkbook

Obviously, the New Year's resolution to lose weight doesn't work well enough to ward off the same resolution each year. So, consider instead a resolution focused more on long-term health rather than weight and appearance.

**Question:** Is there a way to focus on health, assist with weight management and last throughout the year?

**Answer:** Yes. Using the approach of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans with our own twist, it's as simple as ABC:

>> Aim for a healthy level of body fat.

>> Build or maintain a healthy muscle mass.

>> Choose an adequate and balanced diet and exercise plan.

Focusing on a healthy level of body fat and muscle mass removes the obsession with rapid and potentially unhealthy weight loss. A balanced diet and exercise plan is essential to build or maintain muscle tissue. This prevents a drop in calorie needs and enhances loss of fat instead.

**Q:** What is a balanced diet?

**A:** A balanced diet contains about 50 nutrients in the amounts needed to carry out a multitude of body functions. The diet must replace all the vitamins, minerals, protein, carbohydrate and fat that

are steadily breaking down in the body. When this is done right, the body is said to be in a state of "homeostasis." To lose fat, the goal is to keep everything but fat homeostatic, allowing a gradual decline in body fat.

**Q:** How much protein does a person need to consume to maintain or build muscle mass?

**A:** Recommendations for protein are set at 0.8 grams of protein per kilogram (about 0.4 grams per pound) of body weight for adults. This assumes that a person is getting enough calories to maintain weight. However, protein needs increase to as much as 0.6 grams per pound of body weight in people who consume low-calorie diets to lose weight.

These are estimates of protein requirements for people of three different body weights:

Weight	Normal Diet	Low-cal Diet
100 lbs.	38 g	68 g
150 lbs.	57 g	102g
200 lbs.	75 g	136 g

**Q:** How much protein do various foods contain?

**A:** Meat, chicken and fish contain 20 to 25 grams of protein per 3-ounce serving (the size of a deck of cards). Firm tofu contains about

13 grams per 3-ounce serving, milk has 8 grams per cup, cooked beans have 7 grams per half-cup, one egg has 6 grams and a slice of bread has 2 to 4 grams.

**Q:** What are the requirements for carbohydrate and fat?

**A:** Carbohydrate is especially needed by the brain and for vigorous physical activity. The brain requires at least 130 grams per day, and an hour of exercise can easily double this need.

A cup of spaghetti or scoop of rice provide about 40 grams of carbohydrate; orange juice or a 3-ounce bagel each have about 35 grams; a slice of bread has 12 to 24 grams.

Some fat is needed to get the essential fatty acids required for basic functions such as blood clotting and blood pressure regulation. Since there is no perfect fat or oil, the basic rule of thumb to ensure adequate fat intake is to get at least 30 grams (about 2 tablespoons) of various fats and oils a day.

If you meet these basic nutritional needs and then eat 100 calories a day less than your energy needs, plus walk or jog a mile each day, the result can be a 20-pound weight loss by Jan. 1, 2004.

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