

## ***The Calorie Conundrum: Beyond the Scale***

As you've noticed by now, there are many facets to weight management. As you've likely also noticed, there is no magic bullet or instant results to be had in the journey. Sticking to a plan, getting back on track quickly after a slip, moving more, making healthy choices, and understanding how weight gain happens are all parts of the process. One other aspect is the much-maligned "calorie". On the surface, the equation seems simple: burn more calories through activity than you take in by eating. But there's more to it than simply cutting calories.



## ***A Calorie Is a Calorie Is a Calorie...or Is It?***

**All calories are not created equal!** Think about it this way: 100 calories from chips and 100 calories from spinach will fill you up differently. For one thing, it will take you fewer chips – about 9 – to reach that 100-calorie mark, and you'll likely still be hungry, which can cause you to eat more to feel satisfied! On the other hand, it takes a full 16-ounce package of spinach to reach 100 calories; it's pretty easy to see which one of these choices would fill you up and fuel your body for longer. Also, the chips draw their calories mostly from fat with little nutritional value, whereas spinach is packed with antioxidants (i.e., substances that protect your body from illness) like beta-carotene and lutein, as well as calcium. Loading up on less healthy choices not only gets you to your maximum calorie count faster, but it will also make it easier to go overboard because it takes a large amount of those foods to provide a feeling of fullness. When it comes to counting calories, it isn't just about the numbers – it's about what will give you more bang for your weight management buck! Let's take a look at some snack food choices to see which one(s) equal 100 calories.

**Which of these items total approximately 100 calories? (Check all that apply.)**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 8 ounces of cola drink          | <input type="radio"/> 3 cups of air-popped popcorn        |
| <input type="radio"/> 9 teaspoons of ice cream        | <input type="radio"/> 1 medium banana                     |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 Oreo cookies                  | <input type="radio"/> $\frac{3}{4}$ of a chicken breast   |
| <input type="radio"/> 24 M&M candies                  | <input type="radio"/> 3 tablespoons of hummus             |
| <input type="radio"/> 6 cubes of sharp cheddar cheese | <input type="radio"/> 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups of blueberries |

If you checked off all the choices, you're correct! Each of these adds up to approximately 100 calories. However, the first five choices on the list won't give you the same nutritional punch – they are full of sugar and fat – nor will they keep your appetite at bay for long. In fact, it wouldn't be too hard to eat all of the first five options at one sitting...and you'd probably still be hungry for more! Instead, you'd want to choose the last five options – the foods that pack protein, fibre, and healthy fats – rather than those with the “empty” calories (that give you calories but little else of nutritional value) found in many snack foods.

## ***The Case of the Hidden Calorie(s) – A Not-So-Big Mystery!***

It may not come as a big surprise that calories can sneak into our diets pretty quickly without us even realizing it. A handful of nuts here, a take-out salad with lots of toppings and rich dressings there – it adds up fast! Couple that with the fact that our bodies remain comparatively sedentary today, then it's easy to see how weight can sneak up with the abundance of readily available, fat- and sugar-laden foods we have at our fingertips!

## Chuck That Calorie Counter!

So, does this mean you have start tallying up the calories of every piece of food to see exactly what your total is? No! Sure, calories matter – generally, a person will gain weight if they take in more calories than their activity can burn off. But the point of the multiple-choice exercise above was to show you that you don't need to keep a calorie counter at the ready! It was to show you how to start being aware – mindful – about which foods and serving sizes are better choices to help keep you satisfied and healthy so you can eat well and see results. A better way to say it may be to **strive to be calorie *conscious* rather than an obsessive calorie counter!**



## What Can I Do?

**You can start practicing to make calorie and portion awareness second nature: eat *this*, not *that*!** One of the calorie cutting keys is to think about calorie *quality* instead of focusing so much on calorie *quantity*. Let's look at some ways you can start controlling the quality of the calories you eat, and in so doing reduce the type and number of calories you put in your body:

### How?

- **Start changing the way you think about food.** Do you believe that more of something will make you feel full for longer, compared with a smaller serving of something else? That isn't necessarily true! People can usually easily polish off a bowl of pretzels but would find it hard to gobble down the same size bowl if it were filled with something like nuts.

### Why? (Part 1)

- In the above example, the difference is that the pretzels are starchy and are made up of lower nutritional quality ingredients like processed carbohydrates, or "carbs". They are highly processed, meaning that they were put through a bunch of machines to break them down for you so your body doesn't have to do all the work. But that isn't what we need! **We need our bodies to have to work at digesting!** Start learning about processed carbs and the foods that contain them, like white bread, pancakes, sugary cereals, cakes, cookies, etc. After eating a food whose calories are mainly taken from these low-quality ingredients, you get a temporary spike in your blood sugar to make you think you're full, but in a short, while you'll be hungry again because the body didn't have to work hard to digest them.

### Why? (Part 2)

- The nuts, on the other hand, are pretty close to their natural state, meaning they haven't been processed/created in a factory. They have more substance, so it is more work to chew them. Most importantly, they pack a nutritional punch since they contain protein, fibre, and healthy fats. Because the body has to break down and use all these nutrients, the nuts will linger in the body and keep hunger at bay for longer.

## What?

- **Look for foods that have fibre, protein, and healthy fats.** Start with fruits and vegetables – they are bulky and keep you full for longer, plus they are packed with nutrients! Seek out whole grains, like whole-grain bread rather than white bread. Choose lean protein like chicken, fish, tofu, and lentils rather than unhealthy fat options like processed deli meats and sausage. And include healthy fats (called monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats on food labels) like olive oil, as well as foods with healthy fats like avocado or salmon. All of these help you feel full and provide you with the energy and nutrition you need to stay active, sleep well, and do all the things you need to do to help you manage your weight!

## When?

- **It all starts with the groceries you bring into your home.** Read labels, taking care to avoid sugary and carb-laden foods. But it's also something that will become second nature to you when deciding what to eat as a snack or meal. You really want to make the most of what you put into your body, so you have to think ahead and decide if the instant gratification of a high fat, processed choice will be worth it if it means you will be hungry again shortly. For another example, take an ounce of strawberries (10 calories) versus an ounce of potato chips (150 calories). Which would you rather snack on, given this knowledge? You could eat the ounce of chips – about 20 chips – or 15 ounces of strawberries (about 3 cups)? The choice seems pretty clear – you can eat more food by eating the strawberries and feel full for way longer. More bang for your calorie buck!

## Calorie-Cutting Keys

To help get you started (you didn't think we'd leave you high and dry, did you?), we have some tips to help you start improving the quality of the calories you put in your body. Try to start thinking about how you can sneak in better quality replacements for less healthy options and you'll be well on your way to making calorie quality a way of life!

### Try these calorie-cutting keys:

- Mix up your mash! Steam some cauliflower until tender and mash that up to replace your usual mashed potatoes – even add a little garlic!
- If you usually use oil or butter when cooking, cut the amount that you'd normally use in half. Also, choose healthier oils like olive, canola, sunflower, and safflower.
- If you would usually have a bowl filled with pasta, replace half the noodles with steamed, roasted, or raw vegetables such as broccoli, cherry tomatoes and mushrooms – instant pasta primavera!
- Use your noodle(s)! Replace your usual spaghetti with penne or ziti. These types of noodles have air because they are tube-shaped, so a cup of the less-dense penne will have fewer calories than a cup of spaghetti.
- Instead of using regular breadcrumbs for a crunchy coating, use Panko breadcrumbs. These Japanese-style crumbs contain half the calories than do their regular-style counterparts.
- When adding cheese to your dishes, cut the usual amount you'd use in half. And buy reduced-fat cheese instead of regular. If you can get low-fat sharp cheddar, you can further boost the flavour!
- The next time you make tacos or chilli, replace half of the meat with black beans, or replace all of the meat with a variety of beans and lentils.
- Why buy salad dressing where you can't control the amount or type of oil it contains? Make your own by using two-parts vinegar to one-part olive, canola, or avocado oil. Get creative and change up the vinegars you use for added variety!



## Mind Shift



### From here

“I just want to eat without thinking. It takes all the fun out of eating!”

“I hardly know anything about what nutrients are in food, much less how much of a food I should eat. I’ll just wing it.”

### To here

“Like any other new habit, it will take time to learn the ins and outs of choosing nutrient-dense, minimally processed foods. No one is born knowing all of this, so as I research on the internet and learn what to look for and how to read labels, I will be kind to myself, ask questions, and soon this will be second-nature to me.”

### How to get there

Take charge of your health by learning all you can about food! Start with your favourite foods. Some of your favourites may fall into the “eat in moderation” category. But some other favourites may be more healthful than you think!

This is also the time to explore and find new favourites. Finding seasonal foods bursting with flavour – e.g., strawberries in the summer – paired with some protein-rich Greek yogurt is a great dessert. With practice, you’ll start getting a good feel for the better choices that will keep you satisfied and motivated.

**Remember: Calorie quality is key!**



## Food for Thought

**The idea behind all of this?** Creating a foundation for a healthier eating pattern. We want you to start thinking “beyond the scale” because it’s important to think about making a change in your overall eating pattern and thought process, rather than using the scale as a barometer of how well you’re doing. You can use the scale for feedback, but it’s more important to make healthier and informed choices rather than simply cutting out foods to see the needle on the scale go down. Let’s go back to the pro and con exercises to see how your current thought process might be placing short-term benefits ahead of your long-term goals.



### Pro

Chips are my favourite guilty pleasure.  
If I have a handful, then I’ll just cut out  
a cup of vegetables later in the day and  
call it even. Then I won’t feel deprived.



### Con

If I cut out the healthier choice to make  
room for the unhealthy one, even if the  
calorie count is the same, then I’m not  
changing my unhealthy eating patterns.  
I’m short-changing myself in terms of  
nutrition and also in terms of reaching  
my long-term goal.

There’s a difference between occasionally indulging in a favourite unhealthy choice and making up for it by cutting down somewhere else that day to balance it out, and regularly swapping out the healthy choice and thinking you can cheat the formula. **Remember: you aren’t making changes for anyone else other than yourself and your health** – if you make unhealthy choices the norm, then the only thing you’re trying to “outsmart” is...you.

You have several tools under your belt now with which to make informed, healthier choices. Above all, if you happen to take a brief detour, remember to be kind to yourself and just get back on track and focused on your goal. Quality counts, especially when it comes to what you put in your body and managing your weight. Fortunately, there are so many delicious, highly nutritious foods to choose from, and as they say, variety is the spice of life!



**So, go on, do your research, get creative, and enjoy learning how to decide whether a food is worthy of your time and energy to eat it!**

And remember, if at any time you have questions about your **CONTRAVE** therapy and would like to speak to a nurse counsellor, call **1-855-CNTRAVE (1-855-268-7283)** from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday to Friday EST.

**CONTRAVE** is a prescription medicine that is used for weight management:

- in patients who have obesity or;
- in patients with overweight and at least one medical condition associated with their weight (such as high blood pressure that is controlled with medicine, Type 2 diabetes, or a high amount of lipids (cholesterol or other types of fat) in the blood).

**CONTRAVE** should be used along with a reduced-calorie diet and increased physical activity.

**CONTRAVE** should be taken exactly as your Healthcare Professional tells you to.

Please refer to the **Patient Medication Information** insert in your product package for important safety information.

**Contrave** **Support  
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