

Tip the Calories Balance in Your Family's Favor

You've probably heard the latest news: more Americans than ever are overweight. Two out of three adults and nearly one in three children and adolescents are overweight or obese. Along with extra pounds come increased health risks for adults and kids alike.

If you burn off fewer calories than you eat each day, over time that can add up to extra pounds. In fact, some researchers speculate that, on average, an imbalance of just 100 extra calories per day is responsible for the growing number of overweight Americans.

It doesn't take a lot of food to get an extra 100 calories per day. For example, each of the following contains about 100 calories:

- A handful of peanuts (about 25)
- Half of a doughnut
- One tablespoon of butter, margarine or mayonnaise
- An 8-ounce glass of a regular soft drink
- Half of a small bag of French fries

But, there's good news, too. It doesn't take a lot of physical activity to burn off an extra 100 calories per day. For example, each the following activities burn about 100 calories (based on a 150-pound person):

- Climbing stairs for 11 minutes
- Riding an exercise bike for 13 minutes
- Gardening for 18 minutes
- Walking for 22 minutes
- Doing housework for 25 minutes

Is your head spinning from all those numbers? Don't worry! You don't need a calculator to keep your family in calorie balance. Just follow easy, everyday tips like these to trim calories and rev up physical activity.

Sneaky Little Calorie Trimmers

- Make pudding and hot chocolate with fat-free milk instead of whole milk
- Serve unsweetened applesauce instead of sweetened applesauce
- Slice cakes and pies a sliver smaller
- Buy fruit canned in water or juice instead of syrup
- Put half the amount of butter on cooked vegetables or in mashed potatoes
- Pop light microwave popcorn instead of regular

- Bake chicken instead of frying
- Sprinkle tacos, casseroles or pizza with half the usual amount of shredded cheese (shred it finer so it covers more surface)
- Ladle up broth-based soups instead of creamy ones
- Use reduced-calorie dressings on salads and fat-free mayo on sandwiches
- Steam or microwave veggies instead of sautéing in butter or oil
- Serve fruit juice in small juice glasses instead of bigger drinking glasses
- Offer diet soft drinks or bottled water instead of regular soft drinks
- Buy low-fat or fat-free milk and yogurt and reduced-fat cheese
- Use a slice less of lunch meat or cheese in sandwiches
- Sift powdered sugar over cakes in place of frosting
- Buy smaller bagels instead of jumbo ones
- Serve salsa or reduced-calorie ranch dressing instead of regular dip
- Make burgers, meat loaf and tacos with lean ground beef
- Pack two cookies instead of three in lunches
- Scoop up regular or light ice cream instead of super-rich premium ice cream
- Serve spaghetti with tomato sauce instead of creamy fettuccine Alfredo

Fun Family Calorie Burners

- Get a step counter for each family member and "dare" everyone to take an extra 2,000 steps a day (enough to burn about 100 calories)
- Teach the dog to fetch or play Frisbee
- Race each other to see who can finish household chores first
- Go roller skating or roller blading
- Team up to wash the car, rake leaves or shovel snow
- Walk or bike to the store together
- Plant and tend a family vegetable patch
- Do an exercise video together
- Play tag or jump rope
- Let the kids teach you the latest dances, then teach them dances from "your day"
- Take a walking-friendly trip to the zoo or a museum
- Institute screen breaks that require 10 minutes of stretching or walking around for every hour of TV or computer time (and try to limit screen time to one to two hours per day)

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