

Nutrition Matters

Are all calories created equal? If you are a calorie counter, you may choose your meals based on calorie content and taste. This leads one to ask, is your motivation weight management alone or good health and longevity? What if focusing on feeding your body the nutrients, minerals, vitamins and fiber it needs to function optimally enabled you to manage your weight, sleep better, move better, think more clearly, and live longer? Many people have found this to be true for themselves.

A calorie is defined as the amount of energy needed to raise the temperature of 1 kilogram of water 1 degree Celsius. When calories are defined in relation to food, not all calories are equal. You could eat an ounce of cotton candy, which equals 100 calories, or a cup of blueberries, which is also 100 calories. You probably know which of the two provides real nourishment for your body, but let's break it down a bit.

Cotton candy is about 95% refined carbohydrates. These are considered empty calories because of their lack of nutritional value. This type of calorie is digested very quickly leaving you with a feeling of hunger. Because refined carbs have a high glycemic index, they spike blood sugar and insulin levels. A consistent diet of refined foods is often associated with weight gain and Type 2 diabetes.

You could, instead, spend your 100-calorie snack moment on a cup of berries and elevate your body's energy and overall health. Berries are high in antioxidants, which help your body fight cancer and toxins. The antioxidants also strengthen your immune system. They contain vitamins C and K, as well as the minerals manganese, copper, and folate. Berries provide fiber, which aids in the digestive process by slowing the movement of food through the digestive tract helping reduce hunger.

Suddenly, berries become the obvious choice for a great 100-calorie snack!

Wise choices are made one by one and build, layer by layer, to create habits that ultimately determine lifestyle. The great news is, it's never too late to make a change in your choices. Remember the Kaizen method from our January fatigue article? If you need to make a change, do so in small increments, one step at a time.

Here are some valuable choices to get you started:

- Drink 2 liters of purified water daily
- Walk 20 minutes or more, most days
- Sleep 7 to 9 hours every 24-hour cycle
- Eat protein with every meal
- Consume a colorful variety of vegetables daily
- Shut off electronic devices and talk with a human
- Sit in the sun for 10 minutes and daydream
- Choose living, nutrient dense food

Your choices determine your outcome. Choose wisely, remembering your choices influence others. You are a leader in whatever role you occupy. Choose to care for your body well and influence others to do the same.

