

# Should I Count Calories?

The golden questions in all diet topics... Should I count my calories? This question has a few answers depending on your overall goals. Looking to lose weight, short answer: yes. Looking to gain weight or muscle tone: maybe. Wanting to just maintain your current physique: probably not. Let's break each one down.

If your goal is to lose a few extra kilos, and you are finding that simply adopting a regular exercise routine and maintaining a healthy balanced diet is not getting you the results you want, then calorie counting is going to be very beneficial for you. To achieve weight loss, you need to be in a calorie deficit. Yes, I know calorie counting can be tedious and annoying, but it really is the best way to calculate the number of calories you are consuming. From there you can see if you are regularly hitting that calorie deficit with your usual diet. If you are not, then you can start making changes to ensure you are. A calorie deficit over time will lead to weight loss.

My recommendation: My Fitness Pal. Log everything you eat and drink, every day, for a week. See where you might be going wrong, then make adjustments. You want to be aiming for around 1500-1800cal a day depending on how active you are during the day. Not the exercise you do, but the incidental movement you do. If you have a desk job and you find yourself sitting most of the day, then 1500 is for you. If you are on your feet or on the move most of the day, 1800 may be better for you. Adjust that number until you find the weight loss you are after. These figures are general, but they usually work for most people.

Now if your main goal is to gain weight or increase muscle tone, you actually need to be in a calorie surplus. For some, this is easy, eat lots of food... But it could still be worth checking your calorie intake to ensure you are eating enough to support your daily movements as well as your exercise, plus more. Counting your calories for a short period can give you this answer, so again, if you are not seeing the results you want, count your calories.

Finally, if you want to just stay as you are, continue with your regular exercise, your healthy eating and maintain your healthy habits, then there is no need to count your calories. Just keep doing what you are doing. If you decide one day that you want to change your physique, then you can adopt one of the strategies above. But if not, don't waste your time, just keep plodding along as you are.

Just remember that it takes time to see changes so don't immediately adopt a different calorie target after a week of not seeing any results. Give it a month, at least, before making any changes. And also remember that you do not have to do it forever. If you count your calories for a week, you will start to get an idea of what your regular foods are worth in calories and you won't need to log it every day. Then all you need to do is check back in every now and then to ensure your portions are still correct and that you are still hitting the calorie target. Do not let calorie counting take over your life. Just let it help you every now and then.