

7047 - What Causes Weight Gain?



Your body is like a wallet – if you put in more than you take out, it's going to get fatter. Energy, which is measured in calories, comes from what you eat and drink, and is burned up by physical activity. Some people end up overweight because it's easy to take in more calories than we exercise away.

Drinking Your Calories

When you're thirsty, the best drink is water – it's refreshing and calorie-free.

If you're used to drinking other things, you may be taking in more calories than you realize. For example, a sweetened, whipped, iced coffee drink from your favorite coffee shop contains **THREE CHEESEBURGERS** worth of calories!

Twenty years ago, an 8-ounce cup of coffee with whole milk and sugar was about 45 calories. Today, a steamed 16-ounce mocha with whole milk and syrup adds up to 350 calories. Burning up those 305 extra calories takes about 80 minutes of walking.

What about milk? Lower fat milk is a healthier choice. Drinking 2 - 3 cups of 1% milk every day is a great way to get the calcium your body needs – with fewer calories than cheese or yogurt. And studies show that dairy calcium helps people lose weight by triggering the body to burn more fat, especially around the waistline.

What about sugar? The original bottles of Coke were 6.5 ounces. Today, it's not unusual for someone to drink 2 litres of pop a day – which contains about **1 cup** of sugar. Many fruit-flavoured drinks have glucose/fructose added – and that's sugar, too. These liquid calories don't fill you up – in fact, and they actually make you hungrier for your next meal.

And then there's alcohol: a bottle of beer or 7 ounce glass of red wine contains about 150 calories. That takes about 40 minutes of walking to burn off.

What can you do?

- Think about whether you need those calories from beverages (other than milk) when you're trying to lose or maintain weight.
- Drink smaller servings (small or regular – not extra-large) and choose skim or 1% milk with no added sugars.

Fast Foods

Today, many people eat on the run. And that comes at a price: a double cheeseburger with large fries and a large cola is about **1300 calories** and nearly half of your total fat budget for the day.

Many restaurants are offering alternatives like salads with low calorie, fat free dressings, or grilled chicken sandwiches on whole-wheat rolls. Many fast food and family style restaurants also offer a menu nutrition guide. Ask for it! It's up to you to make your choices more nutritious and lower in calories and fat.



Sometimes, making a healthier choice is as simple as removing the extras. Be aware of high calorie additions such as salad dressing, butter and sour cream. Ask for a grilled chicken sandwich without the mayonnaise or “special sauce.”

Other healthier fast food choices include:

- Grilled fish sandwich
- Whole wheat rolls
- Fruit or fruit and yogurt
- Baked potato (with vegetables instead of cheese, butter or sour cream)
- Salad with dressing on the side or fat free salad dressing
- Single hamburger (regular or children's size)
- Low fat deli meats on whole wheat or pita bread
- Wraps on whole-wheat tortillas (without dressing or mayonnaise)
- Skim or 1% milk or water

Portion Sizes

Food portions have grown in size over the past 20 years. Today, most restaurant servings provide enough calories for at least two meals.

With packaged foods, keep in mind that one serving isn't the same size as the container it's packaged in. Check the label; you may be surprised at how small one serving actually is.

Years ago, bagels were 3 inches in diameter and about 140 calories (equal to two slices of bread). Today's 6-inch bagels provide about 350 calories. The difference (210 calories) would take 50 minutes of raking leaves to burn up. Two wedges of pepperoni pizza used to total 500 calories. Today, two wedges from a large pizza are 850 calories. The average person would have to golf for an hour to burn the extra 350 calories.

What can you do?

- Order smaller portions, share the meal with a partner or ask your server to put half in a doggy bag before you start eating.
- Look to **Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating** to check portion sizes. This may mean choosing mini sizes of bagels, muffins or pita bread.
- Read labels to learn the serving sizes and number of servings in a package. Compare similar products by looking at their Nutrition Facts panels so you can make an informed choice.