

# BURN MORE CALORIES ROUND THE CLOCK

From the moment you wake up until lights-out, you set those calcs on fire. Learn some simple ways to sizzle more, effortlessly.

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You haven't read this story yet and you're already a calorie-burning pro. By the time you finish, you'll have torched about 15 calcs. Sure, it won't help your jeans fit better, but it's not too shabby for lounging on the couch while paging through a magazine. In fact, your body consumes calories 24/7 like a champ, even while you sleep. By the time your alarm goes off in the morning, you've already burned roughly 500 simply by snoozing—yep, you're that good.

Just as a car runs on gas, your body relies on calories to keep going. Most are burned during its never-ending housekeeping duties such as pumping the heart, circulating blood, breathing, and even blinking, says Zhaoping Li, M.D., Ph.D., director of the center for human nutrition at David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. And the behind-the-scenes work that you can't see or feel—keeping your immune system at the ready or firing up neurons—is powered by energy in the form of calories too.

Your brain alone needs about 420 calories a day in order to function.

The total amount of energy required to keep your body up and running is your resting metabolic rate, or RMR, and it accounts for 60% to 75% of the calories you utilize on any given day. For the average woman who doesn't exercise regularly, that's an RMR of about 1,400 calories (depending on factors such as genetics, height, and body type). Age plays a role, too:

Once you hit your thirties, your metabolism slows by roughly 10% every decade, primarily due to the loss of muscle mass.

Eating more calories than you need for your RMR without moving enough to burn them off causes your body to store the extras as fat—and hello, weight gain. It's not news that bumping up calorie burn can help you slim down, but what's surprising is that you don't have to break a sweat to do so. Let's start kicking some calorie butt, shall we?

## EAT TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

Great news for foodies: 10% of the calories you use daily are burned just by processing your meals (called dietary thermogenesis). During digestion, the body works to break down food in the stomach and then absorb its nutrients into the bloodstream.

But not all calories are created equal. The ones in a skinless chicken breast, for example, are superior to those in a brownie. Aside from the fact that the sweets won't keep you full for long, your body doesn't burn as many calories when digesting the brownie. That's because the protein in chicken is made up of large molecules, and your digestive system has to use some serious elbow grease to break them apart. The result of all that effort: To extract 100 calories from a protein-rich food, your body burns through about 30 calories. (You use just six to 10 calories while digesting 100 carbohydrate calories, and three calories for the same amount of fat.)

This isn't a green light to gorge on chicken wings—calories will still add up, no matter the source, but being mindful about portion size and what's on your plate could give you a slight burn advantage.

## GO BIG AT BREAKFAST

The morning isn't the time to skimp, so opt for a veggie omelet and whole grain toast over coffee and a banana. One study found that overweight women on a 1,400-calorie-a-day plan who ate a 700-calorie breakfast, 500-calorie lunch, and 200-calorie dinner lost more than twice as much weight compared with those who had the reverse meal pattern. Study authors believe that hormonal changes are at play. In the A.M., when cortisol and adrenaline levels are high, food is more likely to be used for energy rather than converted to fat. So if you front-load calories during your morning meal, they'll be more easily burned off as you walk, run, lift, and bend your way through your day.

Of the calories you incinerate each day...

**60-75%**

are burned for your RMR to fuel hard-working organs like the heart and lungs.

**15-30%**

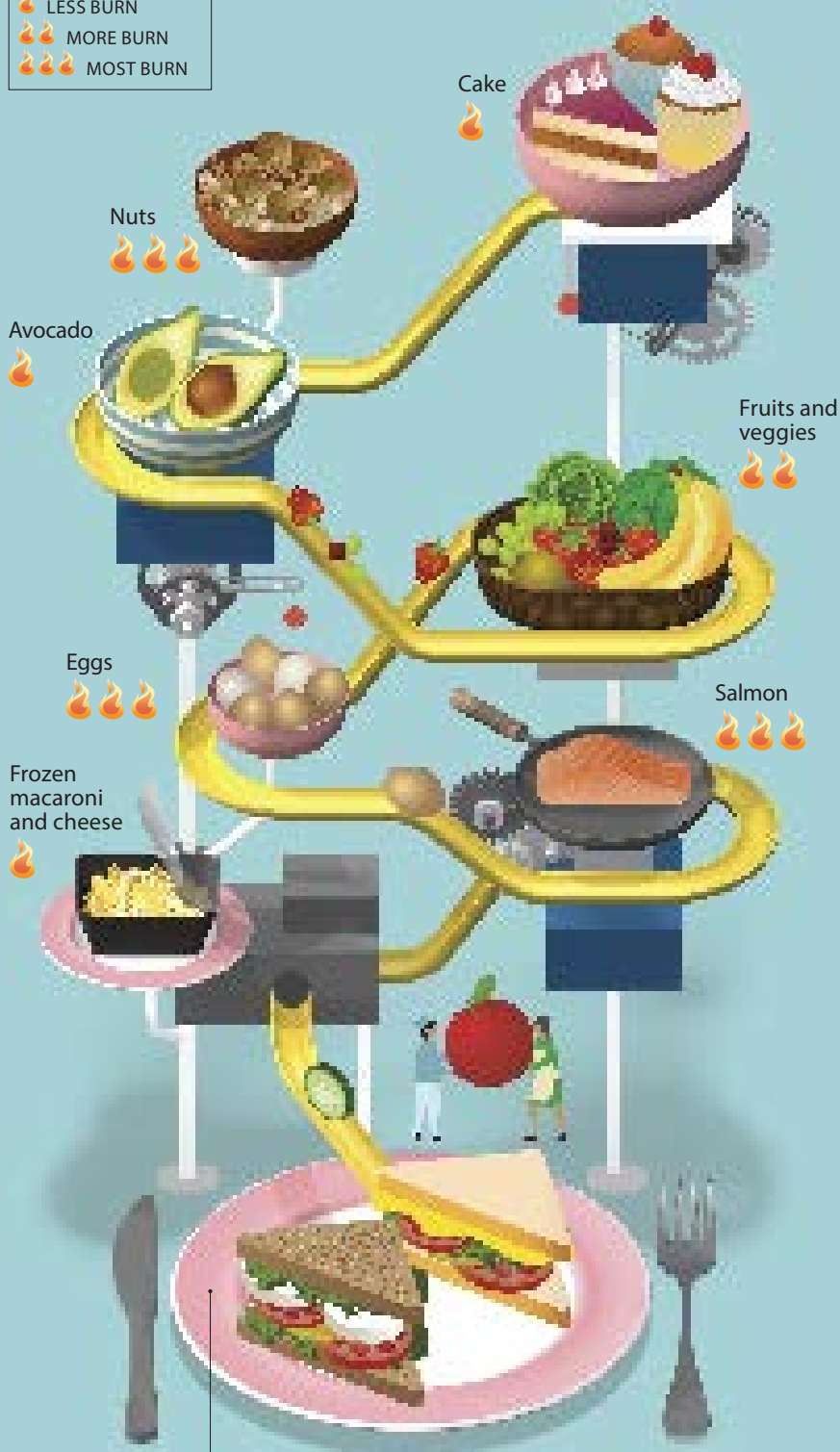
are burned by movement, whether that's exercise at the gym or daily activity.

**10%**

are burned by the process of eating and digesting food and beverages.

Digesting your food burns calories (a.k.a. dietary thermogenesis).

- 🔥 LESS BURN
- 🔥🔥 MORE BURN
- 🔥🔥🔥 MOST BURN



**Sandwich Truth**  
 Choosing whole wheat bread over white will burn more cal during digestion, and its fiber will keep you fuller longer.

## TAKE A PASS ON PROCESSED

Processing foods, whether to turn tomatoes into ketchup or rice into cereal, often kick-starts the breakdown of nutrients, giving your body less digestion work (and in turn, fewer calories are burned). Compare two 600-calorie sandwiches: One study found that it takes almost 120 calories for the body to process the one made with a nutty whole wheat bread and real cheddar cheese—but only 64 calories to digest the one on white bread with processed cheese product. So with the healthy sammie, your body burns off about twice as many of its cal while you chow down.



## Hot Science

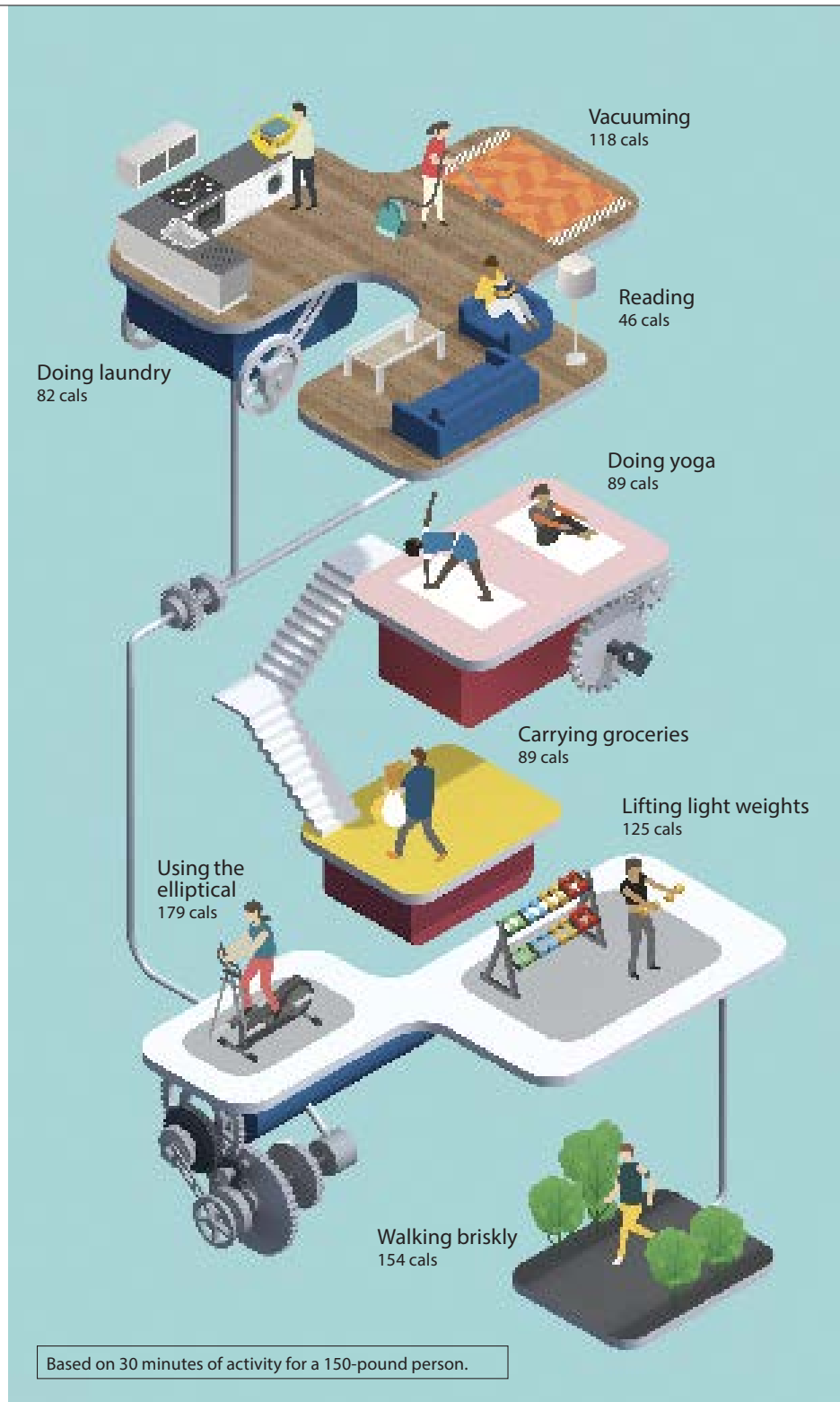
Pocket this fun piece of trivia: 19th-century scientists developed a way to calculate the number of calories in food by setting it on fire. Food was placed in a machine immersed in water and burned, and the calories were calculated by measuring the spike in water temperature. Today, we use a more up-to-date approach, based on the energy released by each of a food's specific nutrients (proteins, fats, carbohydrates, etc.). The result: more-accurate nutrition labels, fewer charred carrot cakes.

## KEEP IT MOVING

The final chunk of your daily calorie burn comes from physical activity, both normal daily movement (showering, vacuuming, carrying groceries) and intentional exercise (jogging, yoga, strength training). Most people can expend more calories with regular day-to-day movement—which researchers call nonexercise activity thermogenesis (NEAT)—than they can at the gym, says James Levine, M.D., Ph.D., codirector of Obesity Solutions at Mayo Clinic Arizona. That's because the difference between the daily NEAT burn of a busybody compared with someone who is mostly sedentary can be as much as 2,000 calories—way more than you'd use up with a gym workout or a light jog after a do-nothing day. Some ideas to get you thinking about how to move more: Walk to the coffee shop instead of driving, spend an evening strolling around an art exhibit rather than watching TV, even chop and dice veggies versus buying precut produce at the store.

## MAKE MODERATION YOUR MANTRA

If your workout mentality is More is better, know that going bonkers at the gym won't erase bad food choices. Research shows that calorie burn will plateau after a certain amount of exercise. When you get above a moderate activity level, the body adapts in an attempt to conserve its resources. This isn't to say you should hang up your sports bra; exercise is critical for heart, brain, bone, and immune health. But if you want to lose weight, it's far easier—and more effective—to put down the cookies than it is to elliptical them away. Your best burn-more-calories game plan: Eat a nourishing diet, exercise regularly without going overboard, and get off your bum. Hey, why not stand up to read the rest of this magazine?



## How You Sweat Away Calories

### Step 1

To stay fueled while you exercise, your body taps into calories, burning either carbohydrates (a.k.a. glucose) or fat.

### Step 2

As you begin to breathe heavily, extra oxygen enters your body, where it starts to metabolize the glucose or fat.

### Step 3

This creates carbon dioxide (which you breathe out) and water (mainly as sweat)—and away those calories go!