

NUTRITION GUIDE

The Calories Guide

The one number that determines whether you gain, lose or maintain

Every diet trend eventually comes back to this one principle. Understanding calories properly removes 90% of the confusion around nutrition for good. This guide gives you the practical, no-nonsense breakdown.

8 Tracking Tips

Daily Application

Common Mistakes

Do's & Don'ts

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PT · Dad of 2

WHY CALORIES ARE THE MASTER LEVER

Regardless of food quality, dietary approach or macronutrient split, weight change ultimately comes down to calories in versus calories out. Understanding this properly cuts through almost every conflicting diet trend you'll encounter.

THE NUMBERS



TO LOSE FAT

Eat slightly less than you burn, a deficit of 300-500 calories per day is sustainable for most people.



TO MAINTAIN

Eat roughly what you burn, this is your maintenance calorie level.



TO BUILD MUSCLE

Eat slightly more than you burn, a surplus of 200-300 calories supports growth without excess fat gain.

THE FOUNDATION RULE

Track your intake honestly for at least two weeks before making any judgements. Most people underestimate their actual intake significantly until they measure it properly.

8 TIPS FOR TRACKING CALORIES ACCURATELY

Weigh Food For 2 Weeks

TRACKING

Essential

Builds an accurate eye for portions that lasts long after you stop weighing everything.

Use A Tracking App

TRACKING

MyFitnessPal
etc.

Makes logging quick and keeps a running total visible throughout the day.

Track Liquid Calories

AWARENESS

Often missed

Alcohol, juice and coffee add up fast and are the most forgotten calories.

Account For Cooking Oils

AWARENESS

Easy to miss

A generous glug of oil in a pan can easily add 150-200 calories unnoticed.

Weigh Weekly, Not Daily

STRATEGY

Reduces noise

Daily weight fluctuates naturally, a weekly average shows the real trend.

Adjust Based On The Trend

STRATEGY

Every 2-3
weeks

If the scale isn't moving as expected after 2-3 weeks, adjust intake rather than waiting longer.

Be Wary Of Restaurant Menus

AWARENESS

Often
underestimate

Restaurant meals are frequently higher in calories than the menu or common sense suggests.

Recalculate As Weight Changes

STRATEGY

Every 5-10kg

Your calorie needs change as your body weight changes, revisit the numbers periodically.

HOW TO APPLY THIS DAILY

Getting your calorie target right is a process of measuring, then adjusting based on real results.

Calculate a starting point

Use the formula below to get a reasonable estimate, then track for two weeks to see how your body actually responds.

Track consistently, not perfectly

Logging most of what you eat most days beats obsessively tracking for a week then giving up entirely.

Adjust every 2-3 weeks based on results

If weight isn't moving in the expected direction, adjust intake by roughly 100-200 calories and reassess.

STARTING POINT FORMULA

Body weight (kg) $\times$ 22-24 = daily calories for fat loss

Example: 90kg dad = 1,980-2,160 calories/day

Target: 0.5-1% body weight loss per week

COMMON MISTAKES WITH CALORIE TRACKING

These are the patterns that most often derail otherwise sound calorie tracking.

1

Creating too large a deficit

Extreme deficits usually backfire through fatigue, poor training performance and eventual binge eating.

2

Judging progress daily

Daily weight fluctuates 1-2kg naturally from water and food volume, look at weekly averages instead.

3

Ignoring liquid calories

Alcohol, juices and coffee drinks are among the most commonly under-tracked sources of intake.

4

Believing healthy food has no calories

Even nutritious whole foods add up in large enough portions, quality doesn't cancel out quantity.

5

Never recalculating

Sticking with the same target for months despite significant weight change leads to stalled progress.

EXAMPLE CALORIE TARGETS BY GOAL (90KG DAD)

Goal	Daily Calories
Fat loss	1,980-2,160
Maintenance	2,400-2,600
Muscle gain	2,700-2,900

DO

- ✓ Track your intake for at least two weeks to get an honest picture of what you're actually eating.
- ✓ Adjust based on real-world results, the numbers are a starting point, not gospel.
- ✓ Be patient. 0.5-1% body weight loss per week is sustainable and realistic.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't create an extreme deficit expecting faster results, this usually backfires through fatigue and binge eating.
- ✗ Don't judge progress daily, your weight fluctuates naturally, look at weekly averages instead.
- ✗ Don't ignore calories just because you're eating 'healthy' foods, even good food adds up in a large enough portion.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Whole foods matter for health and satiety, but weight change still comes down to overall calorie balance. Track honestly, adjust based on results, and be patient with the process.

WANT THE FULL SYSTEM, NOT JUST ONE PIECE?

This guide is one piece of the puzzle. The Fit Dad Challenge brings training, nutrition and mindset together into one 6-week programme built around a dad's actual life.

[Join the Fit Dad Challenge — £99](#)