


# WELLNESS MINUTE

March 2019



**ALL  
CALORIES  
ARE NOT  
CREATED  
EQUAL!**


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**10 TIPS FOR  
EXERCISING  
CONSISTENTLY**

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**BLACK BEAN &  
MANGO SALAD**





# ALL CALORIES ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL!

Everyone has probably heard the saying, “A calorie is a calorie.” Or perhaps you’ve received advice to lose weight by simply reducing calories. How’s that working for you?

The calories in, calories out theory has been the basis of weight loss advice for decades. Let’s take a closer look at what’s true and what’s not so true about this.

A calorie is basically a unit of measurement that represents the amount of energy in a particular food or beverage. According to the laws of thermodynamics, all calories are created equal and this is true in a lab. It’s also true that consuming too many calories can lead to weight gain because intaking more than we need results in the excess being stored as fat.

However, calories from different types of foods vary greatly in how they affect us. The more complete fact is that the quality of calories we consume is more important than the quantity. Let’s examine the quantity and quality of calories in the three types of macronutrients: carbohydrates, protein and fats.



## CARBS

Carbohydrates provide the most obvious example of why all calories are not created equal. Although all carbohydrates provide 4 calories per gram, the type you eat will affect your metabolism very differently.

Dr. David Ludwig, Professor of Pediatrics at Harvard Medical School and of Nutrition at the School of Public Health, has studied this extensively. According to Dr. Ludwig, the type of calories you eat can affect the number of calories you burn. His research has shown that the hormone insulin plays a major role in metabolism and weight. He argues that eating a diet high in processed sugars and refined carbohydrates results in insulin spikes which leads to calories being stored as fat rather than being available for energy. This leads the brain to think that the body is still hungry, which results in overeating.

Keeping in mind that the quality is what matters most, eating complex carbs that are high in fiber is the way to go. Fiber slows digestion, making you feel full longer, and prevents insulin spikes. What are examples of complex carbs? Vegetables, fruits, legumes (beans, peas, lentils, garbanzos), nuts, seeds, and whole grains like brown rice, oats, quinoa, barley, teff, millet, and others. Refined and starchy carbohydrates like white rice, white bread, pasta, and processed snacks and desserts like cookies, pastries, chips or pretzels are the ones to avoid.

## PROTEIN

The main role of protein is to maintain and build new cells. However, it can also help us feel full by slowing down digestion, which can help with weight loss. All proteins provide 4 calories per gram. The quality of protein matters because lower quality, processed meats (like sausage, hot dogs, etc.) have been linked to insulin resistance (as well as cancer). The more your insulin spikes, the more likely you are to develop insulin resistance, which increases the risk of diabetes and weight gain.

## FATS

For decades, fats have been blamed for weight gain and chronic diseases. One reason that people fear them is because they are higher in calories—9 calories per gram. Again, the quality is what matters. Good quality fats are crucial for heart health, brain health, and much more. Like fiber, fats also slow digestion, which can help us feel full and help with weight management. Healthy fats, like avocado, nuts, seeds, fatty fish like wild salmon, olive oil, and others reduce inflammation. On the other hand, refined/processed vegetable oils can cause inflammation.







# 10 TIPS FOR EXERCISING CONSISTENTLY

Have you gotten off track with your exercise routine? Or perhaps you exercise, but find it challenging to do it consistently. This is a common dilemma.

Spring is in the air, and with the warmer weather and longer days, this is the perfect time to focus on establishing a consistent routine. The key is to find workouts that work for you! Here are 10 helpful tips:

**Choose activities that you enjoy.** The key is doing what you enjoy so it doesn't feel like a chore. Pick an activity that's fun so you look forward to it! If you like to dance, try Zumba. If you enjoy being in nature, go hiking. You get the picture. If you're not sure yet, then try a few different types of exercise until you find what works best for you. You may also want to keep your lifestyle in mind. Some people need to go to a class or a gym to stay motivated, while others prefer to work out at home since it can save time and money.

**Take baby steps.** Starting with small goals that you can achieve and build on makes it much more doable. Setting goals that are too ambitious will likely make you feel overwhelmed, exhausted or discouraged if you find it challenging to keep it up.

**Commit to a daily routine.** What you do each day can and should vary, but it's best to commit to some form of daily movement. If you don't have time for a long workout every day, you can still fit in short workouts, such as a 10-minute lunchtime walk or 15 minutes of calisthenics.

**Sign up for a 30-Day Challenge.** Challenges are popular for a reason. They can help to motivate you, hold you accountable, and establish a habit. There are many options available, whether in-person or online through social media. Again, choose what will work best for you!

**Find an exercise buddy.** Peer support is helpful because it holds you accountable, and having someone to join you makes it much more fun.

**Schedule your workout.** If you try to fit it in whenever you have time, chances are you will not get to it. Prioritize it by figuring out exactly when it will work for you and put it on your calendar.

**Set SMART goals.** You will set yourself up for success if your goal is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-specific. It's not enough to just say you will exercise 3-5 times per week. Develop a clear plan. Here's an example: I will exercise for 30 minutes at the gym right after work, 5 times per week, alternating between cardio and strength training. Remember, the Wellness-Connect portal provides a new feature that allows you to create SMART goals and track your progress. Tracking is another key to success!

**Anticipate roadblocks.** Life happens! Even when you have a plan, it's likely that barriers like longer hours at work, extra family commitments or something else will arise. Consider what you can do as a workaround when this happens. Can you squeeze in a shorter workout at home rather than making a trip to the gym? Can you at least go for a short walk after dinner? And, if you do get off track for a few days, that's okay. Just don't let that continue too long. Get back on track as soon as you can since the longer you delay, the harder it will be to get started again.

**Don't overcommit.** Taking one or two days off to rest is also important so you don't burn out. Over-training can also increase your risk of injuries.

**Stay motivated.** Identify your "why." Focus on what you want to gain whether it's maintaining muscle mass, managing weight, achieving a more toned body, reducing stress, looking good, living longer, reducing your risk of disease or whatever else motivates you.

Remember, exercising consistently will help you live a long, healthy life by reducing your risk of disease and stress, and giving you more energy and vitality.



# Black Bean-Mango Salad

This month's recipe is a perfect complement to the information in our lead article since it is made entirely from whole, nutrient dense foods. Not only are the ingredients super flavorful, but they also provide plenty of fiber, protein, and healthy fats. Remember, quality is the key!

## Ingredients:

- 1 cup red quinoa, cooked and cooled slightly
- 1 large handful of spinach
- 1 can organic black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 avocado, cubed
- 1 mango, peeled and cubed
- 1 small red onion, diced
- 1 small handful of cherry tomatoes, quartered
- 1 small handful of fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1-2 lemons or limes, juiced
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tsp. cumin
- Sea salt & fresh pepper

## Directions

In a small bowl, whisk together fresh lemon juice, olive oil, cumin, sea salt and fresh pepper. Set aside.

In a large bowl combine black beans, avocado, mango, red onion, cherry tomatoes, and cilantro. Season with sea salt and pepper. Add in half of the dressing. Toss to combine.

In a separate bowl, add spinach and toss with the remaining dressing.

Plate spinach, top with quinoa, then top with black bean-mango salad.

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## KEY TIPS FOR WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

As the main article emphasizes, counting calories is not enough! Here are some important strategies for managing your weight in a sustainable way.

- Quality matters more than quantity. Instead of counting calories, be sure to mostly choose nutrient-dense foods.
- Eat plenty of fiber, protein, and healthy fats to help you feel full longer.
- Focus on whole foods that are minimally processed, especially lots of vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, seeds, and whole grains.
- Limit sugar and refined, processed carbs because they spike insulin, slow metabolism, increase appetite, and promote weight gain.

