

10 Ways to Boost Your Metabolism



The Elusive Metabolism Boost

Boosting the metabolism is the holy grail of weight watchers everywhere, but how fast your body burns calories depends on several factors. Some people inherit a speedy metabolism. Men tend to burn more calories than women, even while resting. And for most people, metabolism slows steadily after age 40. Although you can't control your age, gender, or genetics, there are other ways to get a boost. Read on for 10 ways to rev up.



Build Muscle

Our bodies constantly burn calories, even when we're doing nothing. This resting metabolic rate is much higher in people with more muscle. Every pound of muscle uses about 6 calories a day just to sustain itself, while each pound of fat burns only 2 calories daily. That small difference can add up over time. In addition, after a bout of resistance training, muscles are activated all over your body, increasing your average daily metabolic rate.



Step Up Your Workout

Aerobic exercise may not build big muscles, but it can rev up your metabolism in the hours after a workout. The key is to push yourself. High-intensity exercise delivers a bigger, longer increase in resting metabolic rate than low- or moderate-intensity workouts. To get the benefits, try a more intense class at the gym or include short bursts of jogging during your regular walk.



Fuel Up with Water

The body needs water to process calories. If you are even mildly dehydrated, your metabolism may slow down. In one study, adults who drank eight or more glasses of water a day burned more calories than those who drank four. To stay hydrated, drink a glass of water or other unsweetened beverage before every meal and snack. In addition, try munching on fresh fruits and vegetables, which are full of fluid, rather than pretzels or chips.



Energy Drinks

Some ingredients in energy drinks can give your metabolism a boost. They're full of caffeine which increases the amount of energy your body uses. They sometimes have taurine, an amino acid. Taurine can speed up your metabolism and may help burn fat. But using these drinks can cause problems like high blood pressure, anxiety, and sleep issues for some people. The American Academy of Pediatrics doesn't recommend them for kids and teens.

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Sinless Snacking

Eating more really can help you lose weight -- eating more *often*, that is. When you eat large meals with many hours in between, your metabolism slows down between meals. Having a small meal or snack every 3 to 4 hours keeps your metabolism cranking, so you burn more calories over the course of a day. Several studies have also shown that people who snack regularly eat less at meal time.



Spice Up Your Meals

Spicy foods contain chemical compounds that can kick the metabolism into a higher gear. Eating a tablespoon of chopped red or green chili pepper can boost your metabolic rate. The effect is likely temporary, but if you eat spicy foods often, the benefits may add up. For a quick boost, spice up pasta dishes, chili, and stews with red-pepper flakes.



Power Up with Protein

The body burns many more calories digesting protein as it uses for fat or carbohydrates. Although you want to eat a balanced diet, replacing some carbs with lean, protein-rich foods can boost the metabolism at mealtime. Healthy sources of protein include lean beef, turkey, fish, white meat chicken, tofu, nuts, beans, eggs, and low-fat dairy products.



Booster Shot: Black Coffee

If you're a coffee drinker, you probably enjoy the increased energy and concentration that follows your morning ritual. Taken in moderation, one of coffee's benefits may be a short-term increase in your metabolic rate.



Recharge with Green Tea

Drinking green tea or oolong tea offers the combined benefits of caffeine and catechins, substances shown to rev up the metabolism for a couple hours. Research suggests that drinking two to four cups of either tea may push the body to burn 17% more calories than normal during moderately intense exercise for a short period of time.

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Avoid Crash Diets

Crash diets -- those involving eating fewer than 1,000 calories a day -- are disastrous for anyone hoping to quicken their metabolism. Although these diets may help you drop pounds (at the expense of good nutrition), a high percentage of the loss comes from muscle. The lower your muscle mass, the slower your metabolism. The final result is a body that burns fewer calories (and gains weight faster) than the one you had before the diet.



Best Bets

The impact of different foods and drinks on the metabolism is small compared to what you need for sustained weight loss. Your best bet for creating a mean calorie-burning machine is to build muscle and stay active. The more you move during the day, the more calories you burn. And remember: working out in the morning has the benefit of revving up your metabolism for hours.