

Metabolism: Processing the Fuel for the Body

It is a common belief that slim people generally have higher metabolism rate than those of overweight and obese people. That isn't necessarily true. Weight is not directly connected to metabolism. One's weight is dependent on the balance of the total calorie consumption as opposed to the total number of calories expended. Once a person eats more calories than his body needs, expect a weight gain to follow. Just the same, taking in less than what the body requires and a weight loss will follow.

Your body requires a minimum amount of calories per day to be able to maintain its essential functions like breathing, maintaining your heartbeat, and keeping the brain properly functional. This is called your basal metabolic rate (BMR). There is a great likelihood that the body burns more calories than your basal metabolic rate, unless you spend the entire day in bed doing nothing.

Your basal metabolic rate accounts for sixty to seventy percent of your daily caloric needs. Several factors affect a person's basal metabolism, it includes:

- Age. A person's BMR lowers as he ages.
- Height. Studies have also shown that taller people have higher BMR.
- Gender. BMR is generally higher in men than in women.
- Body composition. People who have more muscle than fat have higher BMRs.
- Environmental temperature. BMR has also been noted to be generally higher in extreme temperatures of heat or cold.
- Diet. People who live on low calorie diets have low BMRs.
- Stress. BMR appears to increase during periods of stress and anxiety.

Factors like age, gender, and height are difficult to change as we cannot stop ourselves from ageing, or change our height or our gender. However, we have control of other affecting factors to change our basal metabolic rates.

- People who live in areas of extreme temperatures of hot or cold may need to increase their calorie intake to keep their body temperatures normal and support all vital body functions.
- Stress may help burn extra calories, however it is not advisable to subject yourself to mental or emotional stress just for this reason. Physical stress on the body, like pregnancy or growth, may also increase a person's metabolic rate.
- Quick weight-loss diets affect the body by slowing it down, causing the body to initiate energy conservation and decrease its metabolic rate. Not skipping the important meals of the day may increase a person's energy expenditure by 10% as eating requires calories for digesting, absorbing, transporting and metabolising food.
- Exercising helps your metabolism in two ways. First, it helps burn calories while performing the exercise, and it burns even more calories after you stop exercising. It takes as long as twelve hours for a person's metabolic rate to return to its normal rate after exercising. Second, it helps form more muscle, therefore adding to muscle mass that also helps speed up your metabolism. It's like hitting two birds with one stone.

Keeping yourself healthy not only entails that we avoid vices and harmful substances. It also includes eating right and maintaining an active lifestyle. Healthy eating, coupled with the right amount of exercise and the right company leads to a better, happier, healthier life.

About the Author

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