

Questions about metabolism

Your body has a process for taking food and turning it into energy.

This is known as your metabolism. Some diets and exercise plans claim to raise metabolism so you can lose more weight. How does this work, and is it even true?



DOES EXERCISE BOOST METABOLISM?

Exercise burns calories, and you'll continue to burn some more calories after you're done. But don't count on exercise to rev up your metabolism so you can eat much more than usual.

If you exercise and then eat a lot of calories, this can lead to weight gain. Even if your workout is long and hard, watch out for high-calorie foods and drinks if you're trying to lose extra pounds.

Use exercise for its amazing health-boosting powers. But be careful about how many calories you eat. Exercise can't drastically change your metabolism.



DOES MUSCLE BURN MORE CALORIES THAN FAT?

Having more muscle can boost your metabolism a little. But it's only a small amount. Most of your metabolism is controlled by other organs like your brain, kidneys, liver, heart and lungs.

Building muscle mass is still valuable. Lifting weights boost bone health. It can help you with everyday tasks and balance. Just don't count on it to change your metabolism very much.



CAN CERTAIN FOODS BOOST METABOLISM?

Green tea, caffeine or hot peppers can boost your metabolism for a short time. But it's not enough to help a person lose weight.

Green tea has health benefits but be careful with caffeine. The Food and Drug Administration says adults should get no more than 400 mg of caffeine each day. That's about three or four cups of coffee. Some people are sensitive to caffeine and should get much less than this amount. Remember, caffeine can also be found in tea, energy drinks and some sodas.



IF I EAT REGULAR MEALS, DOES THAT SPEED UP METABOLISM?

There are some benefits to spreading your meals out each day. You want to eat on a regular schedule so you don't get too hungry. If you're famished, you're more likely to overeat and take in a lot more calories.

But there isn't any evidence that says eating regular meals will help boost metabolism. Instead, follow your hunger cues. Eat when you're hungry and stop when you start to feel full and satisfied.

Source: U.S. National Library of Medicine