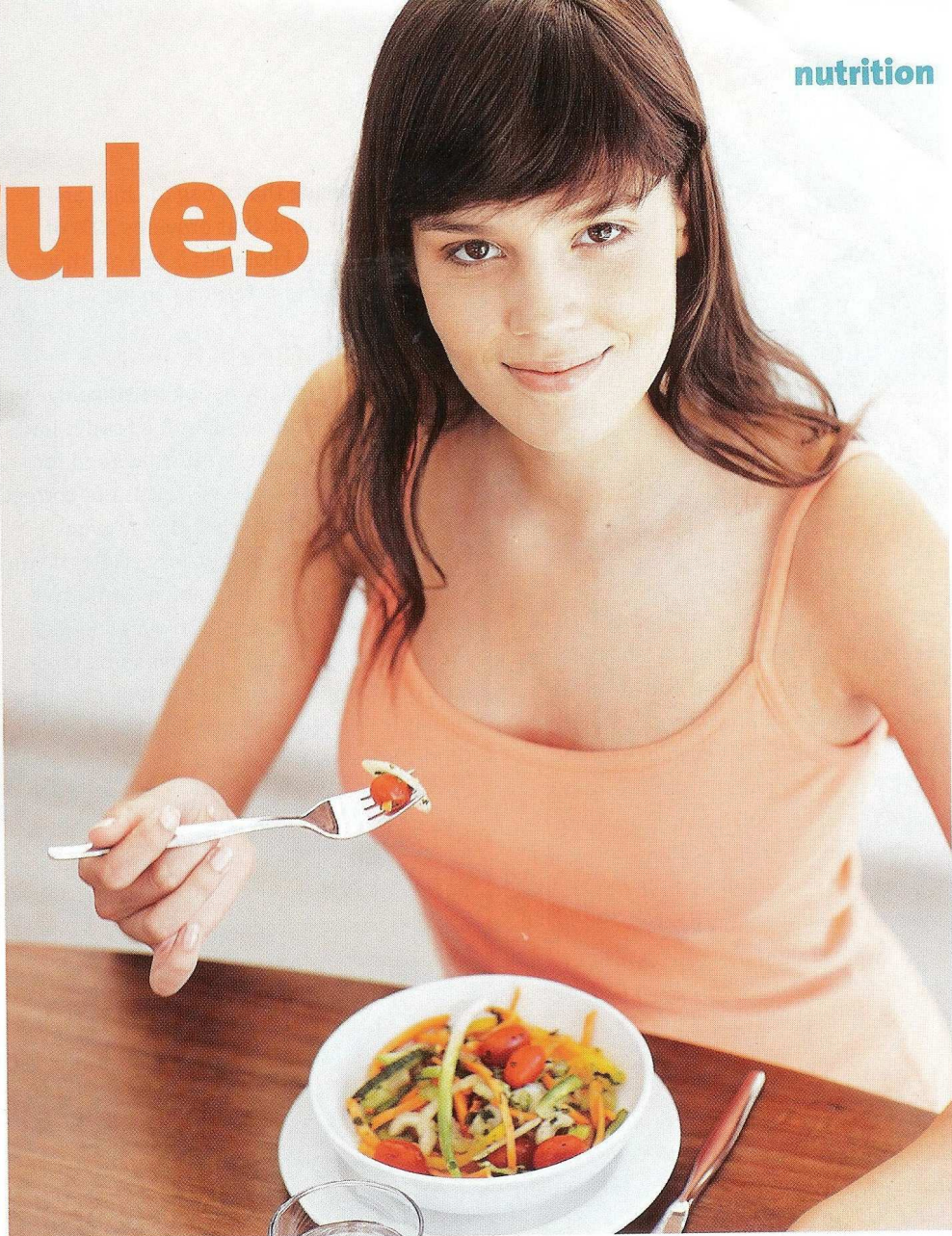


joule rules



Understanding how many kilojoules your body really needs each day can help you lose weight and keep it off

The obesity time bomb

A recent survey of 14,000 randomly selected adults from across Australia confirmed health experts' fears: the number of people considered obese has grown, especially among the middle-aged. The survey, by Melbourne's Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute, concludes 60% of women and 70% of men are overweight or obese. The institute suggests men and women considered overweight (Body Mass Index, or BMI, over 25) or obese (BMI over 30) should try to lose 5kg in five months. The institute says this 'lose five in five' concept has the potential to reduce deaths resulting from cardiovascular disease by 34% and hospital admissions by 27% over the next 20 years.

What is BMI?

The Body Mass Index is a general indicator of body fatness and risk to health. The higher your BMI, the higher your risk of ill-health such as heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and some cancers. To calculate your BMI, go to www.nhlbsupport.com/bmi

BMI = weight (kg) ÷ height (m), squared (m²)

eg 72kg ÷ 1.63m² (2.66) = 27

BMI rating

- 18.5 or less = underweight
- 18.6 to 24.9 = healthy weight
- 25 to 29.9 = overweight
- 30 or over = obese

The kilojoule fog

The main reason why Australians are getting fatter is we are eating more and moving less. One of the reasons we're eating more is the availability of packaged foods that are high in kilojoules and sold in large portion sizes. Many people have no idea what the kilojoule content of foods are, but it's very helpful if you need to lose weight.

What is a kilojoule?

The kilojoule (kJ) is the unit of measure for the energy content of foods. It is the modern version of the 'calorie' (also called 'kilocalorie'). You can convert calories into kilojoules by multiplying by 4.2. For example, 2000 calories is 8400 kilojoules.

Calculating daily intake

Your daily kilojoule needs depend on your age, sex, body size and physical activity levels. The heavier you are and the more physical activity you do, the more kilojoules you need. Being smaller, older and inactive means you need fewer. If you're 150cm, 45 years old, slender, sedentary and do no exercise, then you won't need to consume as many kilojoules as a 175cm, muscle-bound 25-year-old professional football player. If you're watching your weight, see the table, right, for an estimate of your kilojoule requirements. You can also calculate this based on your age, height and weight at www.calorieking.com.au >

Examples of daily kilojoule requirements

Age	Female	Male
2	4200	4400
6	6100	6600
10	7600	8300
14	9200	10600
18	9700	12500
19 to 30	8800	11000
31 to 50	8700	10700
51 to 70	8300	9800
Over 70	7800	8900

Note: From *Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand* (2006), published by the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council. Based on average body weights for children, BMI 22 for adults (170cm man, 160cm woman), and light activity level.



you decide that a bag of chips and a sports drink that provides 20% of your daily kilojoules is too much as a mid-afternoon snack.

Fat vs kilojoules

Many people mistakenly believe that if a food is low in fat, it must be good for weight loss. This is not correct.

In fact, this belief may even sabotage weight-loss efforts if you then eat a bigger portion of low-fat food (such as baked-not-fried savoury snacks). You also have to consider that some fats – the unsaturated kind – are actually healthy. Healthy fats such as those in olive, canola and sunflower oils, margarine spread, nuts, seeds and fish are important to include in your diet in small amounts. For example, one to two tablespoons of oil or spread, plus a small handful of nuts each day and oily fish twice a week will supply the good fats your body needs.

Why can't I lose weight?

Many people eat a healthy diet and still can't lose weight. Counting kilojoules may be the answer. Unfair though it may seem, you can still gain weight overeating healthy food, and counting kilojoules may be the missing link between healthy eating and successful weight loss.

Be kilojoule-savvy

Learning about the kilojoule content of foods doesn't mean you need to carry a calculator with you at all times, but a little effort at the beginning will lay the foundation for more informed lifelong

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The weight-loss equation

Excess body fat is simply stored kilojoules you haven't used. To lose body fat, eat fewer kilojoules than your body needs in order to use those stored kilojoules. To calculate the kilojoule target for losing weight, subtract 2000kJ from your daily requirements. For most adults this takes you down to between 6000kJ and 7000kJ. If you think about the balance of kilojoules IN (food) and kilojoules OUT (exercise) like a bank balance, you need to go into the red to lose weight.

Label gazing

In order to give consumers more information about the food they eat, many food companies are now using the Percent Daily Intake (%DI) label on packaged foods and drinks. The label tells you the number of kilojoules the item contains as a percentage of average daily adult kilojoule needs, which is 8700kJ (this figure is based on average energy intakes for men and women of varying ages specified by Food Standards Australia and New Zealand). For example, you can use the label to help

food choices. Rather than excluding yummy high-kilojoule treats, knowing their kilojoule content can help you enjoy them in more appropriate quantities.

Write it down

If you want to discover the power of kilojoule counting, start by keeping a diary of everything you eat and drink. Tally the kilojoule content for the day using the food label or look it up in a book (available at newsagents) or on a website (such as www.calorieking.com.au). You will quickly discover where the kilojoule blowouts occur.

The problem of portion sizes

Twenty years ago, a typical caramel chocolate bar weighed 30g and contained 565kJ. Today the king-size version weighs 80g and contains 1530kJ. The kilojoule content of many foods has grown over the years and, unfortunately, studies show the more food we're served, the more we eat. But dietitian Amanda Clark, author of *Portion Perfection*, says you can regain control by being aware of exactly how much is right to eat.

"Excessive portion sizes, promotion of energy-dense packaged foods, and passive overeating have left us dazed and confused about how much we really need to eat," says Clark. "When you know how much is right to eat, you can feel less guilty about eating higher-kilojoule foods occasionally."

So have your cake and eat it too – just remember it's the right portion size that counts.

More information

Amanda Clark's *Portion Perfection* (RRP\$34.95) is available at selected bookstores and www.greatideas.net.au

Examples of kilojoule contents of foods

The following foods and kilojoule counts give you an idea of how easy it is to eat more than you need.

Meal or snack	Kilojoules	%DI
Large burger, fries and cola	4847	55.7
3 slices pizza, 2 pieces garlic bread and ice-cream sundae	4715	54.2
1 plain doughnut and 600ml chocolate milk	2612	30
1 slice banana bread and caffè latté	2160	24.8
50g bag potato crisps and 600ml sports drink	1863	21.4
375ml can lemonade	735	8.5

Kilojoule counts are typical and an indication only. From www.calorieking.com.au