

Calorie Knowledge

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Obesity is becoming a major public health concern in Malaysia. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019), Malaysia has the highest rate of obesity and overweight population among Asian countries, with 64% of males and 65% of females being obese or overweight [1]. Malaysians' poor eating habits, which include a high calorie intake, consumption of energy-dense foods, and a lack of physical activity, contribute to this epidemic. This issue requires effective measures to encourage healthy eating habits that can lower chronic disease risk factors.

Nutrition education is an approach to encourage healthy eating habits by delivering nutrition-related knowledge [2]. It is speculated that information which increases knowledge and personal awareness will be productive in inciting behavioural changes [3]. Healthy eating and a well-balanced diet are important aspects of nutrition education. A well-balanced, nutritious diet should supply enough calories and all the essential nutrients to maintain energy balance. Weight gain is caused by a positive energy balance, in which energy intake exceeds expenditure [4]. The main issue with energy balance is the calorie counting for food intake [4]. Most individuals have no idea on how many calories they eat at each meal. Knowing the calorie content can assist an individual to avoid overeating. Dietary calorie information is vital for better nutrition awareness.



(Source: Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia, nutrition.moh.gov.my)

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The following is an overview of basic calorie information.

1. Calories are a measure of how much energy food or drink contains.
2. In general, females should consume 2000 Calories per day and men should consume 2500 Calories per day. (Age, size & physical activity can affect calorie requirement)
3. More calories in than out (positive energy balance) lead to weight gain, less calories in than expenditure (negative energy balance) lead to lose weight, calorie in and out the same lead to maintain body weight.

Knowing how many calories are required per day is necessary in selecting foods that fit the needs of the body. Maintaining a healthy weight requires knowledge of suggested daily calorie intake [5]. Therefore, it is important to know what we eat and its caloric content to practice healthy eating habits.

The “calories in versus calories out” model is based on the idea that the number of calories you eat must match the number you expend in order to maintain a stable weight. Combining dietary adjustments (calorie in) with increased physical activity (calorie out) is the best method to reduce body weight [5]. Knowledge of calorie input will facilitate the target of calorie output planning. Different exercise modalities used different caloric expenditure over the same time period [6].



In conclusion, nutritional understanding, especially calorie-related knowledge, can influence food intake selection and active lifestyle behaviour. Healthy eating and an active lifestyle improve quality of life.

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