

Fuel the Fire

As I progress through the different stages of life, I have noticed and been well aware of changes in my body. I hear over and over again how a person's metabolism shifts as they age. In fact with each passing decade, a woman's metabolism slows by about 5 percent. Hormones play a role in this. A drop in estrogen production happens in the 40's which slows metabolism and as a person ages beyond the 50's or 60's they typically become less active which reduces the level of hormones responsible for maintaining lean muscle mass and bone density. As metabolism slows, the scale seems to steadily increase each time you step onto it.

This doesn't have to be our experience. Let's outsmart Mother Nature and begin to understand the inner fire that fuels us and helps us burn calories, shed fat and stay fit no matter what age and stage of life we may be in. This fire I'm speaking of is our metabolism. Basically, our metabolism is a collection of chemical reactions that take place in the body's cells that convert the fuel in the food we eat into the energy we need to power everything we do. Our body regulates all these metabolic reactions based on how we fuel them to keep our cells functioning.



There are three components that determine our metabolic rate (or total expenditure of energy).

1. Basal metabolic rate (BMR) - This refers to the amount of energy a body needs to maintain itself. This accounts for 50-80% of total energy used (calories burned). Maintaining muscle mass is important here because total lean muscle mass is largely responsible for the BMR and the BMR accounts for so much of the energy we use.
2. Energy used during physical activity - The energy expenditure of the muscle at rest makes up only 20% of expendable energy (calories burned) yet during exercise this can go up to 50% depending on how strenuous the exercise is. Since energy used during exercise is the only form of energy expenditure that we have any control over, we need to take advantage of this and get moving!
3. Thermic effect of food - This is the energy used to eat, digest and metabolize food. Eating actually raises your metabolism! You have to fuel the fire. Diet-obsessed meal-skippers burn fewer calories AND have no energy to move. After each meal, the metabolic rise occurs soon after you start eating and peaks two to three hours later. Fats raise the BMR by 4%, carbohydrates by 6% and proteins by up to 30%.

The faster your metabolism runs the more calories you burn. The more calories you burn, the easier it is to drop those pounds and shed that extra tire around the waist. “You have a huge amount of control over your metabolic rate,” says John Berardi, author of *The Metabolism Advantage*. “You can burn an extra 500 to 600 calories a day by exercising properly and eating right.” That last statement is so true. Dr. Christopher always taught that you don’t need to count calories or worry about food combinations and you can eat as much as you want as long as you are eating a whole foods diet which consists of whole grains, nuts, seeds and an abundant supply of fruits and vegetables.

Here are a few other tips to help you fuel the fire and keep your metabolism rising.

- Eat a good breakfast every single day. If you don’t, your body goes into starvation mode and the metabolism starts to crawl to conserve energy. Eat a breakfast that helps you feel full longer. Lean protein with a complex carbohydrate is a great choice. For example, I love having farm fresh eggs scrambled with lots of veggies. Another favorite is steel cut oats or amaranth with bananas, blueberries, and/ or raspberries. Smother in coconut oil or ghee. Add chopped almonds or walnuts on top. A sprinkle of cinnamon is nice too.
- Get your water in! Dr. Christopher recommended about a gallon a day. Some people claim that drinking ice water helps to fuel the fire because the body has to heat the water to core temperature. I say DRINK LOTS OF WATER however you can best get it down.
- Get protein with every meal, it helps maintain and build muscle mass.
- Drink green tea. I’ve heard it called the “closest thing to a metabolism potion.” Steep it for 3 minutes and drink warm.
- Choose organic produce when you can. Pesticides are stored in fat cells and that can stall your metabolism. Cayenne and chilies (capsaicin heat) fuel the fire.
- Work out. Run or walk, just find an enjoyable way to move the body. A good way to step it up is doing HIIT (High-intensity Interval Training). It is like doing a high-intensity sprint for a minute and then an easy pace for 30 seconds. HIIT routines can be easily found by searching the internet.
- Eat healthy fat. Remember, healthy fat does not make you fat. Healthy fats help trigger the rapid transfer of “I’m full” signals to the brain. My favorite healthy fats are avocado, ghee and coconut oil.
- Eat food but don’t over eat. When you are eating a meal, stop about halfway through, pause and ask yourself, “Is the food still tasting good? Am I satisfied or do I want more?” If you want more then have more but keep checking in. Once you are feeling satiated stop eating. At that point any more you eat will be harder for the body to burn and can be stored in the fat supplies.
- Get plenty of sleep. 8 hours of sleep helps the body’s hormones (leptin and ghrelin) regulate energy.

Take control over what you can to help fuel that metabolic fire and beat the downshift in metabolism that can come with aging.

For metabolism boosting snacks click [here](#).

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