

decrease and fat accounts for more of your weight, slowing down calorie burning.

Energy needs for your body's basic functions stay fairly consistent and aren't easily changed. Your basal metabolic rate accounts for about 70 percent of the calories you burn every day.

In addition to your basal metabolic rate, two other factors determine how many calories your body burns each day:

- **Food processing (thermogenesis).** Digesting, absorbing, transporting and storing the food you consume also takes calories. This accounts for 100 to 800 of the calories used each day. For the most part, your body's energy requirement to process food stays relatively steady and isn't easily changed.
- **Physical activity.** Physical activity and exercise — such as playing tennis, walking to the store, chasing after the dog and any other movement — account for the rest of the calories your body burns up each day. Physical activity is by far the most variable of the factors that determine how many calories you burn each day.

Metabolism and weight

It may be tempting to blame your metabolism for weight gain. But because metabolism is a natural process, your body has many mechanisms that regulate it to meet your individual needs. Only in rare cases do you get excessive weight gain from a medical problem that slows metabolism, such as Cushing's syndrome or having an underactive thyroid gland (hypothyroidism).

Unfortunately, weight gain is complicated. It is likely a combination of genetic makeup, hormonal controls, diet composition, and the impact of environment on your lifestyle, including sleep, physical activity and stress. All of these factors result in an imbalance in the energy equation. You gain weight when you eat more calories than you burn — or burn fewer calories than you eat.

While it is true that some people seem to be able to lose weight more quickly and more easily than others, everyone will lose weight when they burn up more calories than they eat. Therefore, to lose weight, you need to create an energy deficit by eating fewer calories or increasing the number of calories you burn through physical activity or both.

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