Foods with negative calories? [1]

1) Dear Alice,
Which foods, if any, have negative calories?

2) Dear Alice,
I have recently started a weight loss plan and after doing some research I learned about calorie burning foods. My question is, are there really calorie burning foods or is it just another diet fad?

Answer

Dear Readers,

Ah, the mystery of the vanishing calories! The idea of "negative-calorie" foods stems from the notion that the body uses more energy to chew and digest certain foods than the food itself contains, thereby creating a net deficit in caloric intake. While this effect is possible in theory, there is limited scientific evidence to support it. Additionally, limiting your diet to extremely low-calorie foods may mean missing out on the many vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients the body needs to maintain health, as well as missing out on tasty and enjoyable foods.

If you're trying to lose weight, it may still be helpful to consider replacing some higher-calorie foods with lower-calorie ones, such as eating celery sticks or cucumber slices with dips instead of chips. To facilitate weight loss, incorporating more low-energy-density foods (foods that are high in volume and low in calories) to help you stay fuller for longer. These include fresh fruits and veggies, whole grains, legumes, fish, white meat poultry, and more. Mayo Clinic [2] has some more information about creating a well-balanced diet for weight loss.

For even more tips on healthy eating, check out the Go Ask Alice! Nutrition & Physical Activity [3] archives. Additionally, you may find it helpful to talk to a registered diettitian about developing a nutrition plan. Additionally, Reader 2, if you haven't spoken with one already, a health care provider may be able to advise more generally on weight loss and what a healthy weight may look like for you specifically. If you haven't added physical fitness to your routine, it may be a way to not only help maintain a healthy weight, but to also manage stress and reduce your risk of disease. To really get a jump-start on physical activity, you can also check out your local gym,
fitness center, or join an exercise club to get a move on adding movement that feels good to you to your routine! If time or financial constraints make it difficult to do so, you can check out the Working out at home Q&A for more ways to work it into your routine.

Remember, healthy weight loss and long-term weight management require a balanced diet and a decent serving of physical activity — no magic necessary.

Alice!
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Food for Thought

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Resources
Columbia Health Nutrition Services (Morningside)
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