



Understanding energy needs and metabolism



Health



Wellness



Nutrition



Support

Introduction

Metabolism is a term often used in relation to weight loss. We refer to metabolism when we are discussing our energy or calorie needs.

We often describe it as 'higher' or 'lower', and a wide range of factors can affect each individual's metabolism.

The needs of every person is different, so understanding what you can and cannot change is important to help you live a healthy life.

Contents

Introduction	2
What affects our metabolism?	3
Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR)	3
Metabolism and ageing	4
Final thought	4



What affects our metabolism?

The amount of energy each person needs is different. There are some factors we can change and some we cannot.

Non changeable factors that affect your metabolism include:

- **Genetics:** Inherited from parents, this will make you slightly different to other people. Genetics can make us more likely to gain weight easily or act and behave in different ways. This all has an effect on our health.
- **Birth gender:** Women usually need fewer calories than men.
- **Age:** As we get older, our metabolism slows down naturally so we need fewer calories.
- **Menopause:** Hormone levels change during menopause, which can lead to a reduction in muscle mass and an increase in fat storage. We cannot stop menopause from happening, but we can use the factors below to help reduce the effects on our metabolism.

Factors that we can change that affect your metabolism include:

- **How much muscle you have:** People with higher muscle mass use and need more energy to function.
- **How active you are at work and for hobbies:** People who live more active lifestyles use and need more energy. This doesn't necessarily mean going to the gym. Activities such as housework, gardening and walking all help increase metabolism.

Other factors:

- **Medications:** Some medications can affect our metabolism. If you are unsure if this affects you, speak to your GP or other health professional.
- **Medical conditions:** some medical conditions can affect metabolism directly. Others may affect how active we are or the food that we eat. Speak to a GP or health professional if you would like more support with any medical conditions.

Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR)

It can be useful to know your metabolic rate before setting goals. Simply put, your Basal Metabolic Rate (or BMR) is the number of calories your body needs daily, based on some of the factors discussed above. BMR, for example, cannot factor in your genetics without laboratory testing.

There are many online tools you can use to calculate your BMR, such as this one: https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/articles/how_many_calories_do_you_need, but it's important to remember this should still only be used as a general guide.

For a more accurate measurement, you can visit or call one of our Be Well Leisure Centres and ask for a body composition appointment. Our body composition scales measure body fat, muscle mass and other factors to give a more accurate measurement. You can find out more on the Be Well website at <https://bewellwigan.org/location/leisure-centres/>



Metabolism and ageing

As we get older, our metabolism slows down. This happens because our muscle mass decreases and our body processes slow, meaning food isn't digested as quickly or as easily.

These changes make it even more important to remain active and eat well as we get older. Any activity is beneficial, but we should take part in physical activity that promotes muscle strength and balance. This will also help to prevent frailty and decrease our risk of falls.

Good examples of activities that promote strength are:

- Resistance training
- Circuit training
- Racquet sports and ball games like rounders
- Pilates, yoga or tai chi
- Dance
- Nordic walking
- Running

Final thought

The best thing we can do to support our metabolism is to remain as active as possible on as many days as possible. Anything counts, so start small and build physical activity and some strength and resistance training on at least two days of your week.

If you would like to learn more or require more information and support, please get in touch!

Telephone: 01942 496496

Email: wellbeing@bewellwigan.org

Website: bewellwigan.org

