

Think You're Eating Healthy?

Let's face it- eating healthy is hard. It's not hard because it's impossible, but rather because it can be so confusing. There are continually new studies coming out say a certain food is good, and a week later a new study says it's not. Fad, celebrity-endorsed diets come and go faster than we can keep track of. So where can you turn when you're looking for solid, reliable nutritional advice?

What makes recommendations so difficult is that there are a plethora of variances from person to person. Even if you are the same age, gender and weight as someone else, your calorie expenditure may be much different based off of lifestyle choices, level of activity, etc. Because of that, recommendations must be taken with a grain of salt. The Institute for Medicine recommends a breakdown of carbohydrates, fats and proteins into percentage ranges (for adults):

Carbs 45-65% of calories

Fats- 20-35% of calories

Proteins- 10-35% of calories

As you can see, even these ranges are quite broad. When you start talking about children, the confusion just increases. For every change in age group, activity level and/or gender, you're looking at an entirely different recommended daily caloric intake. Because of these fluctuations, one of the best things you can do is to figure out your total caloric expenditure each day and eat around that number.

Your basal metabolic rate, or BMR, is a measure of the calories you require on a regular day-to-day basis for basic life functions. This calculation assumes no physical activity is being performed and therefore minimal energy is being expended. To calculate BMR, there are a ton of online calculators you can use, like this one [here](#). If you figure out your approximate BMR and factor in physical activity, you can get a general idea of your daily caloric expenditure. Once you know this number, you can use the percentage ranges listed above to tailor your diet.

It's important to keep in mind that just like with exercise, change is a good thing when it comes to diet as well. If you find yourself starting at a macronutrient split of 45% carbs, 35% fats and 20% protein, you can later switch it up to 55% carbs, 30% fats and 15% protein, as an example. You will find through trial and error what your body responds best to. There are numerous online and phone app programs that serve as macronutrient trackers. You could start by tracking your normal intake for a week and seeing where your macronutrient ranges fall.

What it all boils down to is finding a balance that works best for you. You may find that your answer isn't even close to what government-recommendations say, and that's okay. Whether your goal is to lose, gain or maintain, find a system that makes sense.