



Delta Gamma Well Aware

Encompasses eight dimensions: Social, Spiritual, Physical, Emotional, Vocational, Intellectual, Financial and Leadership Development

Strengthening Your Metabolism

While we inherit our metabolism from family members, we also have the ability to impact this important body process. Metabolism is the method by which our bodies obtain energy from nutrients. According to *Self Healing (2007)*, “up to 75 percent of the calories you burn daily sustain basic functions like breathing, heart rate, waste removal, plus cell growth and repair. Physical activity accounts for another 15 to 25 percent of the calories used, while digestion and absorption of food uses about 10 percent.” In order to increase our metabolism and force our bodies to burn more calories, we must shift our bodies from fat-storing entities to fat-burning systems.

Below are 14 strategies to speed up your metabolism and thus burn more calories each day:

1. **Lift weights.** One pound of fat burns two calories a day while a pound of muscles burns 35 to 50 calories a day. By engaging in strength training, our bodies will begin to burn more calories due to muscle strength, even when resting. The average women in her 30s who strength-trains 30 to 40 minutes two times a week for four months increases her metabolism by 100 calories a day.
2. **Train in intervals.** By increasing mitochondrial activity, “the tiny engine that produces energy in every cell” (*Self Healing, 2007*), muscles require more oxygen and burn more calories. Mitochondria can be increased by alternating short burst of intense physical activity followed by longer periods of slower activity. For example, exercise for 5 minutes at 3.5 mph followed by 60 seconds of exercise at 4 mph. Return to exercise at 3.5 mph for 90 seconds and then repeat this cycle five times, twice a week. If you need a more challenging workout, increase your incline or pace.
3. **Eat small, frequent meals.** Researchers recommend eating six, small meals a day. Eating frequently helps to hold blood sugar levels steady and ensure your metabolism does not slow down in order to conserve energy. Divide your calorie intake by six and arrange meals that meet this number.
4. **Include protein at each meal.** Protein is more difficult for the body to break down causing the body to exert more energy and thus more calories during digestion. Protein also makes you feel fuller longer and leaves you more satisfied. Lean proteins include beans, soy foods, nonfat dairy products, fish, and skinless poultry.
5. **Select low-glycemic-load carbs.** In a recent study, researchers found those who consumed low-GL foods metabolism burned 80 more calories a day than participants consuming high-GL foods, even with the same caloric intake. Low-GL foods include whole grains, sweet potatoes, fresh fruits, and legumes. High-GL foods include products made with flour, white potatoes, and dried fruits.

6. **Add spices to your meals.** Capsaicin, black pepper, and ginger boost your body's thermostat causing individuals to burn more calories.
7. **Drink green tea.** The antioxidant compounds in green tea increase metabolic rates. One study recommends drinking five eight-ounce cups of green tea a day which may burn 90 calories a day.
8. **Relax frequently.** Stress produces a hormone, cortisol, which slows metabolism and stimulates appetites. According to one study, yoga, which does not burn a tremendous amount of calories, helped to prevent middle-age spread in normal-weight women and men and promote weight loss in those overweight.
9. **Integrate sleep into your routine.** A lack of sleep can stimulate hormones that regulate appetite, increasing weight gain. At the same time, those getting eight hours of sleep produced more ghrelin, a hormone that stimulates hunger, and leptin, a hormone that suppresses appetite.
10. **Use supplements.** Supplements such as Coenzyme Q10, acetyl-L-carnitine, and alpha-lipoic acid may increase energy production by protecting the mitochondrial.
11. **Eat more omega-3s.** Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids stabilize blood sugar levels, regulating metabolism. Foods containing high levels of omega-3s include salmon, herring, tuna, flaxseed oil, walnuts, and eggs fortified with omega-3s. You can also purchase supplements containing omega-3s.
12. **Be careful when dieting.** The frequent logic when dieting is to significantly reduce caloric intake. However, this may trick the body into conserving energy by not burning fat. The key is to eat enough calories to match your resting metabolic rate in order to prevent your body from storing calories.
13. **Eat breakfast.** Eating a nutritious breakfast such as oatmeal, berries, almonds or spinach and feta omelet jumpstarts your metabolism for the day, allowing a few extra calories to be burned.
14. **Consume organic foods.** Nonorganic produce interferes with the thyroid which controls our body's temperature and determines how fast the body consumes energy.

While metabolism is hereditary, we have the ability to control many factors that influence how well our body burns calories and uses energy. By supporting our body with strength-training and exercise while being smart about eating habits, we have the ability to increase our metabolism.

References

10 natural ways to tune up your metabolism. (2007). *Self Healing*, 4-5.

Healthy shape. (2008). *Health*, 22(2), 49-55.

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