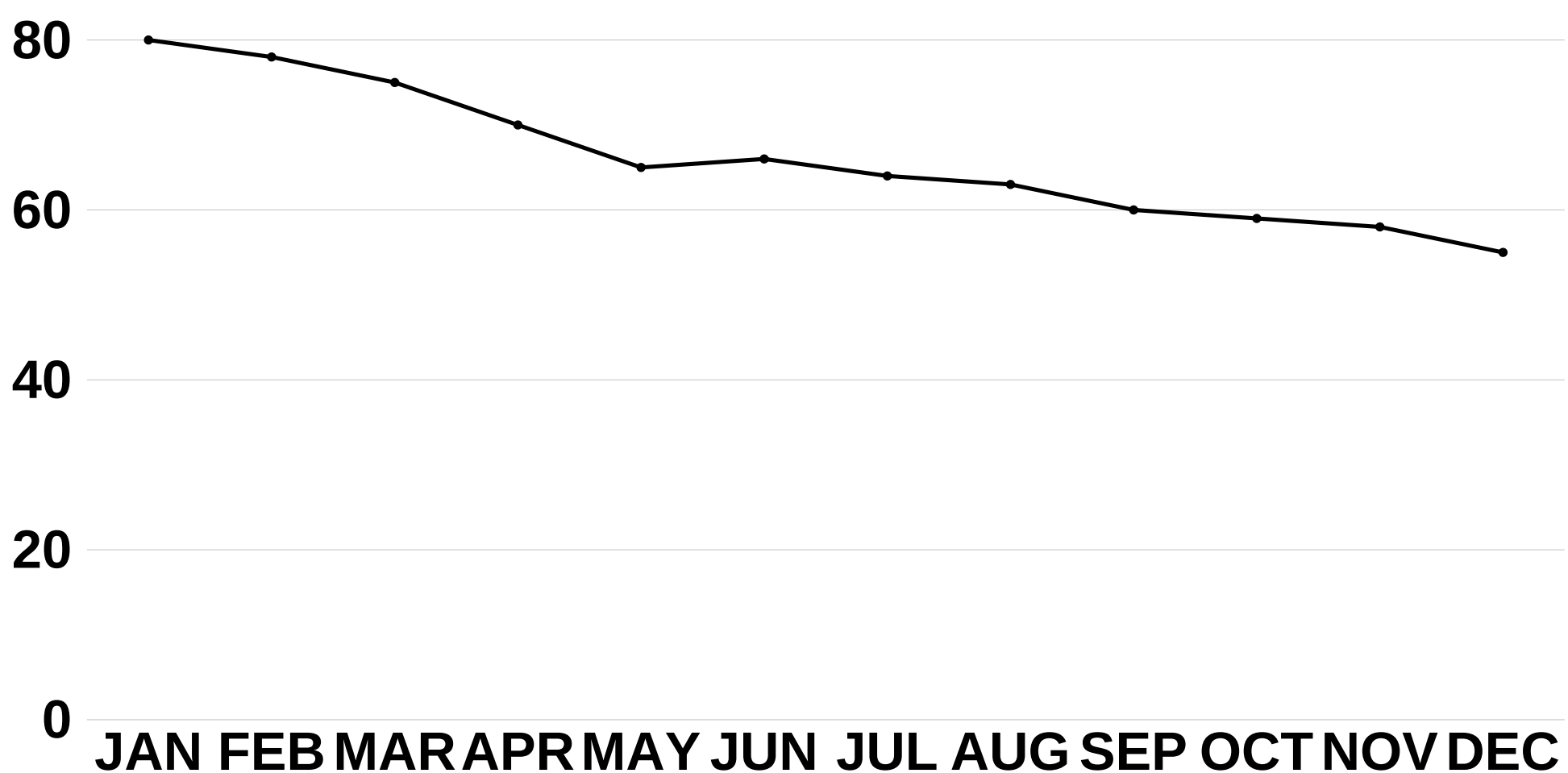# 9TO5 NUTRITION

THE CALORIE MAINTENANCE HANDBOOK

9-to-5-nutrition.com

How To Calculate Your Maintenance Calories

Hi, I'm Joe. I help busy office workers lose weight and build muscle so they can achieve their dream body as quickly as possible.

The key to effectively managing your body composition (the ratio of fat to muscle you have) comes from knowing roughly how many calories you need to eat to either lose weight or build muscle.

The gateway to finding this number, is through knowing roughly what your *maintenance calories* are.

Your maintenance calories, are the average number of calories you burn in a day. If you ate the same number of calories as this, you'd maintenance your weight, hence; maintenance calories.

Once you're aware of this number, you can either adjust down (for weight loss), or up (for muscle gain).

There are a few different ways to calculate your maintenance calories, some take a bit less time, but are less accurate, whereas the the method that takes the most time will be the most accurate.

Caveat: None of these methods are 100% accurate, but it doesn't matter. The important thing is that you have a rough baseline to work from.

Here goes;

Method 1: The Harris Benedict Equation

1. Go tho this URL: https://manytools.org/handy/bmr-calculator/

2. Enter your details

3. Get Your Results (I've pasted mine below)

Your BMR

BMR: **1800**

Daily Calorie Needs: **2700 calories**.

Calculation based on the revised Harris-Benedict equation by Roza and Shizgal from 1984.
PAL (Physical activity level): 1.5
Gender: male

Use the bottom number (Daily Calorie Needs) is the one you want.

So, 2700 burned per day on average

The Top number is your BMR (i.e. your metabolic rate), this is the number of calories you'd burn if you laid down all day doing nothing (this is only affected by your weight, height, gender and age, therefore there's not much you can do to change it).

When you enter your activity level, don't stress too much about which one describes you best, just pick one that closely matches your activity level and go from there, remember, this is just a start point, we'll learn more about our true maintenance when we start tracking weight, calories and activity

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Measuring sytem:	Metric (cm/Kg) ⬍
Height (centimeters):	178
Weight (Kg):	78
Age:	33
Gender:	Male ⬍
Activity level:	Heavy work / heavy exercise (1.8) ⬍

Sitting/lying all day (1.2)
Seated work, no exercise (1.3)
Seated work, light exercise (1.4)
Moderately physical work, no exercise (1.5)
Moderately physcial work, light exercise (1.6)
Moderately physcial work, heavy exercise (1.7)
✓ Heavy work / heavy exercise (1.8)
Above average physical work / exercise (2.0-2.4)

Method 2: Data Extraction From Activity Tracker

Most activity trackers will use your heart rate to estimate how many calories you burn.

They will generally estimate your daily calorie burn, and in order to get your maintenance calories from this, you should take an average across as long a period of time as possible. I'd recommend a minimum of 2 weeks.

Here, I have my FitBit data from the past rolling month (I've taken this from the FitBit desktop dashboard, but taking from the mobile app is just as good).
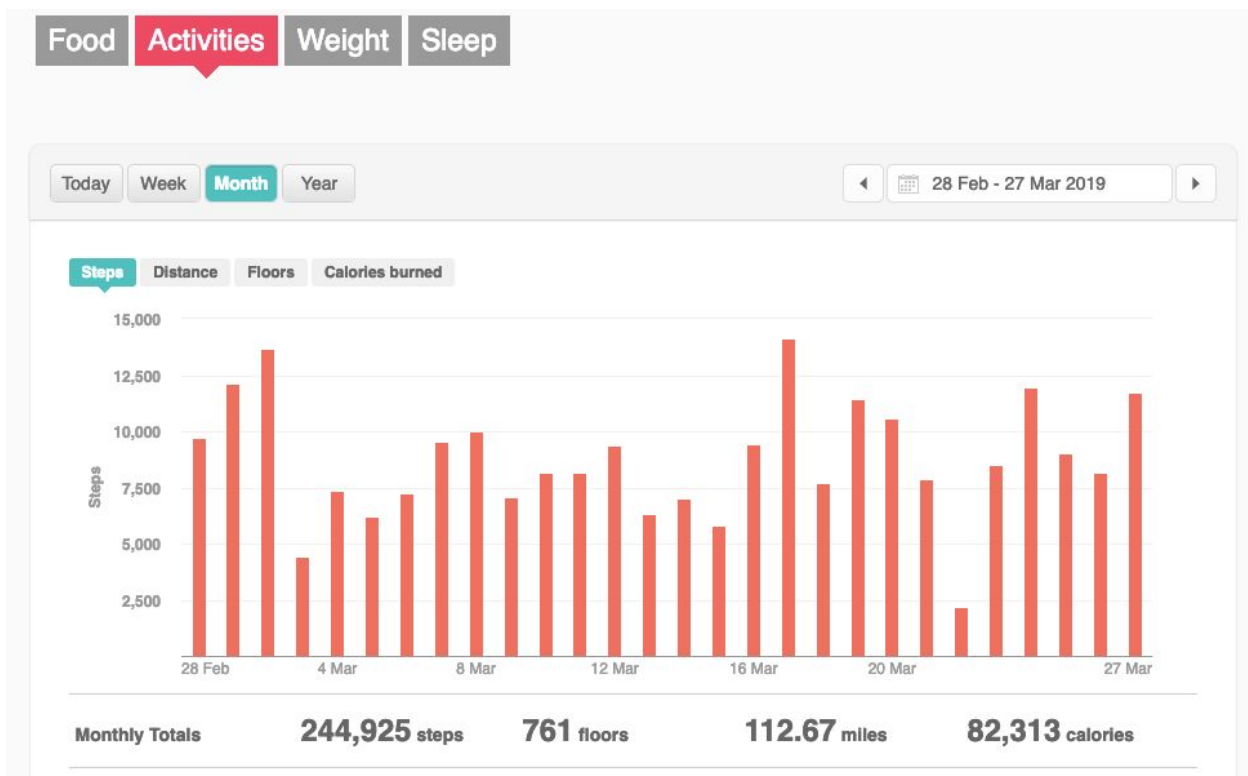
What this data tells me, is that, from 28th Feb-27th March, I've burned 82,313 calories.

All I need to do is divide this by the number of days to get my average daily calorie burn.

This is 26 days, so;

82,313/26 = 3165 calories burned per day on average

Why is this so much higher than the previous figure of 2700 spat out by the Harris Benedict equation?

It's probably simply down to the fact that I grossly underestimated my activity level using the Harris Benedict method.

Don't worry about this, after we've looked at the 3rd method, we'll choose one method to go with, or take an average of the 3.

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Method 3: Track calories and weight for 2 weeks

This is the most time consuming, but also arguably the most accurate (but still not 100% accurate) method.

What you'll need to do is track your weight and calories for a period of time. The longer you do it, the more accurate results you'll get, but again I'd recommend a minimum of 2 weeks.

This will tell you how the volume of calories you eat directly affects your weight.

Caveat: There are other things that affect your weight, such as the amount of water you've drunk recently and the amount of food in your gut – so weight loss or gain doesn't necessarily equal fat loss or gain, but long term weight gain or weight loss is a good barometer as to whether you've gained or lost fat

So, eat as you normally would but track all your calories in My Fitness Pal, or another similar app everyday.

Also track your weight everyday. Do this at the same time of day (preferably first thing in the morning, before eating or drinking anything, and after going to the toilet), everyday. You can do this either on paper, on the Notepad on your phone, or preferably within My Fitness Pal.

Once your tracking period is up, you'll divide the total amount of calories you ate to get a daily average.

You'll then look at your start weight and finish weight.

If it's increased you can be fairly certain you were in a calorie surplus, if it decreased you can be fairly certain you were in a calorie deficit, if it stayed the same, you were at maintenance.

Here's how maintenance might look;

Calories and Weight (Kg)

And here's the hypothetical daily weight and calorie measurements

Date	Jan 7	Jan 8	Jan 9	Jan 10	Jan 11	Jan 12	Jan 13
Calories	3018	2717	2900	3176	2614	2909	3520
Weight (Kg)	80	80.2	80.3	79.9	80.1	80	80.5

Jan 14	Jan 15	Jan 16	Jan 17	Jan 18	Jan 19	Jan 20
2100	3008	3146	2988	2765	3237	2989
80.3	80.3	80.4	80.2	80.1	80.3	80.6

Jan 21	Jan 22	Jan 23	Jan 24	Jan 25	Jan 26	Jan 27
3065	3470	2899	3001	2699	3089	3127
80.4	80.3	80.1	80.2	80	80.3	80

To calculate the average amount of calories you ate each day, simply add up the calories you ate each day and divide by the total number of days you tracked for.

In this case the average is 2973.

If your starting weight and finishing weight are the same, this means you were eating at calorie maintenance for the period you tracked.

In this case, we can be confident that the calorie maintenance was 2973.

If over the period your weight has increased, you can be confident you are eating above maintenance calories, if your weight has decreased, you can be confident you were eating below maintenance calories.

What Next?

Once you have a good idea of your maintenance calories, you can then make an informed decision on how many calories to eat based on your goal, whether that's weight loss, muscle gain or sports performance.

Of course, your maintenance is not static and will change over time based on your activity level and weight.

For this reason, you should consistently track your weight, calories and activity to ensure that you are on track with your goal. If you veer off course, you will have the data to analyse why, and you can make adjustments to get you back on track.

If you need any further help with losing weight or building muscle, get in touch.

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