

# Chow Line

News from the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences

## Exercise important, but calories count more

**I have been doing more walking and other exercise since the first of the year, but I haven't been losing much weight. Shouldn't I see some results on the scale?**

First, it's excellent that you're boosting your activity. It's no surprise that most Americans need more exercise, but the U.S. Surgeon General reported recently on the extent of the issue: Less than half of U.S. adults get enough physical activity each day to reduce their risk of developing a chronic disease, including diabetes, cancer, or heart or lung disease. Even worse, only one-quarter of teens in high school get enough. So, no matter what the scale says, keep it up.

With weight loss, remember that exercise is only part of the equation, and many studies indicate that it's a smaller part than you might think. Although both physical activity and eating right play a role, research indicates that reducing calories is far more important in shedding pounds.

It's easy to overestimate the calories you think you might be burning when you take a nice, brisk walk. Everybody — and every *body* — is different, but you can go beyond taking a wild guess by using online tools to help you gauge what you might be burning off. One such tool, the Physical Activity Calorie Counter, is available under "Healthy Living" on the website of the American Council on Exercise, [acefitness.org](http://acefitness.org). There, you can plug in your body weight and time spent on an activity, and you get an estimate of calories burned. Here are some examples for a 150-pound person:

- A half-hour casual walk (a mile in 30 minutes): 68 calories. That won't even burn off the 80 calories in one Snickers Fun Size candy bar.
- A half-hour very brisk walk (a mile in 15 minutes):

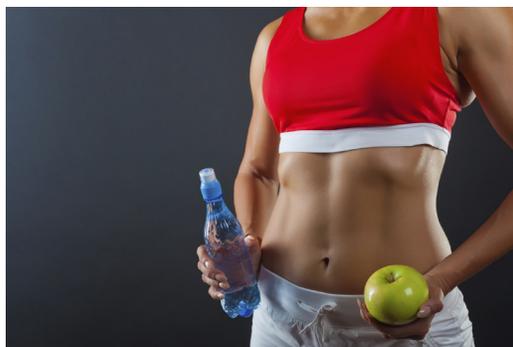


photo: iStock

170 calories, not enough to expend the 240 calories in a 20-ounce bottle of Coca-Cola.

- An hour of very fast cycling (12-13 mph): 544 calories. That's significant, but it wouldn't be enough to offset the 430 calories in a Panera Cinnamon Crunch Bagel plus the 130 calories in reduced-fat plain cream cheese you put on it.

Calorie-wise, passing on one or two treats each day adds up. Water is a great zero-calorie choice of beverage, and you'll want to enjoy just half of your bagel or skip the cream cheese before you jump on your bike. That said, it bears repeating that physical activity in and of itself provides health benefits. How much is recommended?

- Adults should get 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity over the course of a week. Moderate activity is enough to increase your breathing and heart rate, but you should still be able to talk during the activity. With vigorous activity, such as jogging or running, you can't say more than a few words without taking a breath.
- Adults also need muscle-strengthening activities that work all the major muscle groups two or more days a week.
- Children should get an hour of moderate-intensity activity every day.

Learn more from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [cdc.gov/physicalactivity](http://cdc.gov/physicalactivity).

Jan. 29, 2016

By Martha Filipic  
614-292-9833  
[filipic.3@osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@osu.edu)

**Editor:** This column was reviewed by Carol Smathers, Ohio State University Extension specialist in Youth Nutrition and Wellness.

*Chow Line is a service of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1043, or [filipic.3@osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@osu.edu).*

**College Marketing and Communications**  
2021 Coffey Road  
Columbus, OH 43210-1043  
614-292-2011

208 Research Services Building  
1680 Madison Ave.  
Wooster, OH 44691-4096  
330-263-3780

© 2016, The Ohio State University

CFAES provides research and related educational programs to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis. For more information: [go.osu.edu/cfaesdiversity](http://go.osu.edu/cfaesdiversity).