# WHAT IS A CALORIE?

**You may have heard a lot about calories –** especially that they aren't good for you! Calories are not actually bad; in fact, your body needs calories to survive. We get these needed calories through food and drink. But if we eat too many calories and don't burn them through exercise, we can gain excess weight.

**What exactly is a calorie? -** A calorie is a unit of energy. In terms of physical activity, the harder you exercise the more calories you can use up.

While just going about your everyday life may not be enough to prevent weight gain, you also don't need to become a marathon runner in order to expend calories. You may be surprised by how many calories you can burn off just through activities that don't feel like "exercise" – they're just fun!

**How many calories can I burn through exercise? -** The amount of calories you burn when exercising will depend on factors such as how much you weigh and if you're a man or a woman. To give you a general idea, here is the amount of calories men and women might burn in just 10 minutes doing various activities:

*Source: MOVE! Weight Management Program, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*

| Calories Burned in 10 Minutes | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **LIGHT ACTIVITY** | **MALE** | **FEMALE** |
| Ballroom Dancing | 35-50 | 28-40 |
| Cleaning, Sweeping at moderate effort | 26-38 | 21-30 |
| Washing Dishes | 29-42 | 23-30 |
| Tai Chi | 35-50 | 28-40 |
| **MODERATE ACTIVITY** | **MALE** | **FEMALE** |
| Bicycling at < 10 miles per hour | 46-66 | 37-53 |
| Step Aerobics | 64-91 | 51-73 |
| Cleaning Gutters | 58-83 | 46-66 |
| Mowing the Lawn | 64-91 | 51-73 |
| Raking Leaves | 44-63 | 35-50 |
| Walking at 4 miles per hour | 58-83 | 46-66 |
| Shoveling Snow | 61-88 | 49-70 |
| Bowling | 44-63 | 35-50 |
| Golf, Walking and Pulling Clubs | 61-88 | 49-70 |
| Slow Lap-Swimming | 63-90 | 54-72 |
| **VIGOROUS ACTIVITY** | **MALE** | **FEMALE** |
| Jogging (9 min/mile) | 149-213 | 119-170 |
| Basketball | 75-108 | 60-86 |
| Carrying Groceries Upstairs | 87-125 | 70-100 |

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