

The 30 Pound Club

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September 8, 2011 – Grand Rapids, MI

Calculating Your Calorie Goal

Last week I asked you to calculate your calories using the weight loss calculator on the *Lancet* website at <http://www.thelancet.com/series/obesity>. If you haven't had time with Labor Day and school starting, do it now. There are roughly 120 days left in the year, and you can still hit a 30-pound weight loss even if you haven't started. I'll share my example with you and point out some of the things to watch for.

I entered a starting weight of 225 pounds, height of 5' 9.5", light activity level, with some exercise. Using those numbers, my activity factor was 1.6 and the number of calories I'm supposed to need to maintain my weight is 2,932. That seems about right.

I indicated I wanted to lose 30 pounds in 120 days. I filled out the Detailed Activity Level and indicated I would run at a medium level every day for 30 minutes. The calculator's result: I would need 2,516 calories every day to lose 30 pounds in 120 days, a decrease of about 400 calories per day. Once I achieved this weight loss, I could add about 150 calories per day to maintain it.

The only confusing part was the physical activity in the maintenance phase; it isn't totally clear whether the activity estimate you're supposed to enter is in addition to your initial activity level or to what you've done while losing weight. If I say I will add the same activity level as when I was losing weight, I can go up to 3,400 calories per day. That doesn't make sense, so I think you should enter any activity in addition to what you did during the weight loss phase, because realistically, you might expect to run faster, walk farther, lift more weight, or take more dance classes after you've lost weight.

If you have trouble estimating how your activities compare to walking, running, or cycling, go to the Health Info page of drchet.com and use the Exercise Intensity Table in the Basic Health Info section.

Other than the directions being clearer, I think it's a realistic illustration of what you can expect. As long as you set a realistic time frame, you don't have to starve yourself—you just have to be consistent. If you haven't done it, try it especially if you've gotten off track over the summer. I'll finish up about this on Saturday; there are more things from the study I want to talk about, including why we start gaining weight after six months or so.

One and Done.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

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