

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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You've probably seen dozens of ads for supplements or machines that claim to "boost your metabolism", usually to help you lose weight. Just what are they referring to? What is metabolism anyway? The simple answer is that it's how you use energy.

Energy in living things is measured as calories, so we're talking about how we burn our calories. We need energy calories to breathe, to keep the heart pumping, to make new blood cells, get rid of waste, even yes, to think. The energy to do all of those basic things our bodies do without us even thinking about them, that's our Basal, or Resting, Metabolic Rate. It's what keeps us alive when we sleep.

Another big chunk of energy goes for digesting and absorbing our food. Yes, it does take energy to chew and digest that celery stick. But, sorry, it is not a negative energy food. We'll still get more calories from it than we put into digesting it. All the digesting and absorbing of all our meals uses about one tenth of our total daily energy.

Then we add on top of that basic amount of energy how much more energy it takes to get up and move around. All physical activity uses energy. The more active we are, the more energy calories we burn. But, some people burn more calories than others doing the same thing. Some are more efficient at getting the work done for fewer calories. So often when someone talks about 'boosting their metabolism' what they really want to do is get their body to be less efficient. They want to burn more calories while doing the same amount of work. Can it be done?

You can make your body burn more calories, but not in the way advertisers would like you to think! The most effective way to increase the amount of calories you burn is to be more active. But that's what people want to avoid! They'd rather take pills than power-walk or peddle a bike. There are a few very small studies that suggest that green tea extract for example will raise your resting metabolic rate. Great! Burn more calories while you sleep! Yippee! How many more calories gone? Ummm - only 75. That's right, 75 calories a day. At that rate it would take 47 days to lose one pound. Plus, most of the supplements don't have as much of the extract as was used in the studies. So they won't burn even that many calories. Oh well....

But what about all the other supplements? The bitter orange? Similar to ephedrine, it may not be safe. Caffeine? Not very effective, and the heavier the person the less effective it is. Ephedrine? Banned because of at least 17 deaths. Guarana? Lots of caffeine. Yerba mate? Raises blood pressure. Yohimbe? Lowers blood pressure. There are more, but the worst part is that none of them are very effective. And the amount used in research is rarely what is in a supplement pill.

So what's left? **Be Active, Get your Sleep, Eat Breakfast, and Don't Skip Meals.** The more active we are the more muscle cells we build. Muscles burn more calories than fat. Do aerobic and weight/strength training. Both kinds of activity help burn calories and build muscle. How much you sleep changes the hormones that control your appetite, and they help control your weight. People who sleep less than 6 hours a night are more likely to be overweight. Eat breakfast to get your metabolism going at the beginning of the day. Breakfast also means you're less likely to overeat at lunch or snack time. Skipping meals allows your metabolism to slow down during the

day, and means you won't have the energy to get up and be active. It might seem all backwards, but for many of us, sleeping more and eating more, at least more regularly, really can help us lose weight!

One trick that can help us feel full faster is to use more soup and stew in our meals. The liquid tells our stomach we've had enough faster when it comes in food instead of a glass or bottle. So, here's a quick and easy stew for these chilly days. Posole is a Mexican stew or soup made with hominy, a white corn.

#### Peanut Posole Stew

1 can (15 oz) hominy	1 can (15 oz) fat free low salt chicken broth
1 cup water	1 medium onion, chopped
4 cloves garlic, chopped	1 can (4 oz) diced green chilies (mild or hot)
1 ½ tsp ground cumin	1 tsp chili powder (mild or hot)
½ cup dry roasted, unsalted peanuts	1 -2 cups chopped cooked chicken, optional
1 can (10 ¾ oz) low fat, low salt cream of mushroom soup	

Drain hominy. Combine hominy, broth, water, onion, garlic and spices in large saucepan. Add chicken if using. Bring to boil and simmer 10 minutes. Add peanuts and mushroom soup. Return to boil and simmer 5 minutes. Garnish with more chopped peanuts, chili powder or chopped parsley if desired. Serve hot. Serves 4.