

About Your Diet: Are You Lying to Yourself?



By [Brooke Douglas](#) on February 1st, 2013

“One mini candy bar does not even count.”

Actually, it does count. Everything counts. It is the cold, hard truth about weight loss. Even the creamer in your coffee counts. One piece of Hershey’s Bliss® milk chocolate candy contains 35 calories (actually the same as 1 tablespoon (Tbsp) of French vanilla coffee creamer). If you have one piece of chocolate and 1 Tbsp of coffee creamer every day, you have accrued 490 calories in 7 days.

“I am sure that my exercise more than makes up for this.”

A person who weighs 150 pounds burns 358 calories in 1 hour of low-impact general aerobics, 573 calories in 1 hour of riding a bike at a speed of 12–14 miles per hour (mph), 1146 calories running at a speed of 10 mph for 1 hour, and 215 calories in 1 hour of walking at a leisurely pace (2.5 mph).



“This food contains many nutrients, so I should not feel guilty about eating it.”

Sure, that smoothie might contain some real fruit and milk, but a 16-ounce smoothie usually contains 250–300 calories, depending on the restaurant, and while a salad can provide many vitamins and minerals, a hand-tossed Asian sesame chicken salad at Panera Bread® contains 418 calories and 20 grams of fat. That is maybe fine if it is your meal, but not a good idea for a snack if you are trying to lose weight.

“I know that my portion sizes are small or at the most average.”

People are consistently shocked by the size of standard portions, even if they think that they know exactly what a serving looks like. Have you ever actually measured out ½ cup of pasta or ice cream? How about 1 teaspoon of margarine or 2 tablespoons of salad dressing or maple syrup? Try it for a day. What is the worst that could happen?

“I do not need to keep track of what I eat. I can do it in my head.”

Think about the creamer and the piece of chocolate previously mentioned. Would you think to count that in your mental tally? Most people would not. Yet, 500 calories in 1 week is enough to hinder a weight loss plan. In fact, study after study has shown that the average person dramatically underestimates calories consumed. This is linked to the belief that if a food is nutrient rich, it cannot hurt your weight loss plan.

People underestimate how much they eat at “healthy” restaurants by up to 50%. Brian Wansink, author of *Mindless Eating*, asked people to estimate the calories in a special combo consisting of a foot-long Subway® sandwich with mayonnaise, chips, and juice. One man estimated that it contained 300 calories. In fact, it contained 1390 calories. The man stated that he would not have purchased the meal had he realized that.