

## Consult the Dietician



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### **MYTH: AGING SLOWS YOUR METABOLISM.**

**Truth:** People do tend to put on weight as they get older, but it isn't inevitable. People have a tendency to exercise less, or less vigorously, as they age—and that means fewer calories burned per day. As activity levels and intensity go down, loss of muscle mass can occur. This then shrinks the body's fat-free compartment and leads to a lower metabolic rate. Cardiovascular exercise will burn calories, and resistance training to preserve or build up muscle are great defenses against age-related weight gain.

### **MYTH: YOU'RE STUCK WITH THE METABOLISM YOU HAVE, AND YOU CAN'T CHANGE IT.**

**Truth:** We all seem to know people who can “eat whatever they want and never gain weight” or those who “just look at food and put on 10 pounds.” But lifestyle plays a big part in determining the calories you burn per day. While it may appear that there are people who eat all the time and never seem to gain, chances are they make healthy, relatively low-calorie selections naturally. And many of these people burn more calories through what is called Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis (NEAT)—basically, they move around a lot during the day. They might fidget more, get up from their desks frequently during the day to stretch, or walk down the hall to talk to a colleague instead of emailing. Next time you're in a public place—say a coffeehouse—become an observer. You may notice that heavier people sit very still and hardly move. Leaner people may use more hand gestures, or wiggle a foot or a crossed leg. The point is, build more muscle and then use it by moving around more throughout the day.

### **MYTH: EATING A GRAPEFRUIT WITH MY MEAL WILL SPEED UP MY METABOLISM.**

**Truth:** There's nothing special about grapefruit that will speed up your metabolism. Sometimes it's recommended that you should eat half a grapefruit with each meal for this purpose. But the reason this may work is not because of anything magical about grapefruit. It's simply a watery, low-calorie food that takes up space in the stomach that might normally be taken up by higher-calorie foods. It may help weight loss, but it doesn't have any effect on your metabolism.

### **MYTH: IF I CUT CALORIES, MY METABOLIC RATE WILL SLOW DOWN, SO WHAT'S THE POINT OF EXERCISING?**

**Truth:** It is true that your metabolic rate can slow a bit when you cut calories. After all, your body's natural inclination will be to try to conserve calories as best it can. But these decreases are relatively small, and if people become more active as they lose weight, this can offset these small changes. By dieting and exercising, you can help to preserve the rate at which your body burns calories.