

**Are you running on empty calories?** from [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)

Many foods and beverages Americans consume contain **empty calories** from solid fats and/or added sugars that add calories to the food but few or no nutrients. For this reason, these are often called empty calories. **Solid fats** are solid at room temperature, like butter, beef fat, and shortening. Some solid fats are found naturally in foods; others are added when foods are processed or prepared. **Added sugars** are sugars and syrups added when foods or beverages are processed or prepared. Solid fats and added sugars can make a food or beverage more appealing, but they also can add a lot of calories.

Most of the empty calories come from:

- Cakes, cookies, pastries, and donuts (both solid fat and added sugars)
- Sodas, energy drinks, sports drinks, and fruit drinks (added sugars)
- Cheese (solid fat)
- Pizza (solid fat)
- Ice cream (both solid fat and added sugars)
- Sausages, hot dogs, bacon, and ribs (solid fat)

Many of these foods can be found in forms with less or no solid fat or added sugars, such as low-fat cheese

and low-fat hot dogs. Check to confirm that there are fewer calories than the regular product. Choose water, milk, or sugar-free soda instead of drinks with sugar.

In some foods, like most candies and sodas, **all** the calories are empty calories. Empty calories from solid fats and added sugars can also be found in foods that contain important nutrients, including these:

<u>some empty calories</u>	<u>few or no empty calories</u>
Sweetened applesauce (added sugars)	Unsweetened applesauce
Regular ground beef (75% lean) (contains solid fats)	Extra lean ground beef (95% or more lean)
Fried chicken (solid fats from frying and skin)	Baked chicken breast without skin
Sugar-sweetened cereals (added sugars)	Unsweetened cereals
Whole milk (solid fats)	Fat-free milk

A small amount of empty calories is okay, but most people eat *far more* than is healthy. Reduce your intake by choosing items containing empty calories *less often* and by decreasing the *amount* consumed.

**Recipes of the Week: Fruit Smoothies**

**Strawberry-Banana Smoothie (serves 1)**

- 1 cup calcium-fortified soy milk
- 4-5 frozen strawberries
- ½ banana
- 1 tbsp. flaxseed oil

Combine in blender and mix well.

**Nutrition information:** Calories: 293      Total Fat 19g  
Saturated Fat 2g      Carbohydrate 36g  
Sodium 137mg      Dietary Fiber 6g      Protein 12g

**Raspberry-Mango Elixir (serves 2)**

- 1 cup fresh chilled raspberries
- 1 medium chilled mango, peeled, pitted, and diced
- 6 oz. calcium-enriched tofu
- 1 ½ cups fat-free vanilla soymilk
- 1 tbsp. maple syrup

Blend and serve.

**Nutrition information:** Calories: 266      Total Fat 11g  
Saturated Fat 1g      Sodium 86mg  
Carbohydrate: 43g      Dietary Fiber 8g      Protein 19g

**Pineapple-Melon Shake (serves 2)**

- 1 cup chilled diced pineapple
- 1 cup chilled diced cantaloupe
- 1-6 oz. container of low-fat plain organic yogurt
- ¾ cup calcium-fortified orange juice
- 2 tbsp. ground flaxseeds or flaxseed meal
- 2 tbsp. maple syrup

Combine all ingredients in blender and mix well.

**Nutrition information:** Calories: 239      Total Fat 3g  
Saturated Fat 0.4g      Sodium 87mg  
Carbohydrate 48g      Dietary Fiber 4g      Protein 8g

**Tip of the Week:** Create healthier surroundings by creating positive peer pressure. Live as an example to your family, friends and co-workers. This motivates others while keeping your own standards of conduct high. *adapted from 4 Steps to Healthier Surroundings by Mike Kramer, www.sparkpeople.com*