Calories or fat grams

Calories or fat grams? 30%? A calorie is the standard unit for measuring energy released from energy-yielding nutrients, such as fat, protein, and carbohydrate. Fat is an essential nutrient that helps the body transport and absorb fat-soluble vitamins (e.

g., A, D, E, and K), among other functions. Whereas proteins and carbohydrates have only four calories of energy per gram, fat has nine. Food labels are federally standardized to help make it easier for the consumer to know whats in a particular food. You can calculate the percentage of calories from fat by looking at the column marked " Percent Daily Value" for total fat and simply add up these percentages. Its recommended that fat make up no more than 30 percent of your daily diet (meaning less than or equal to 30 percent of total calories a day from fat). Although it is important to watch both calories and fat grams, its best to focus on the total number of calories consumed, which often seems to be forgotten. With the introduction of low-fat and fat-free versions of many common foods, youd expect people to lose weight.

Instead, many are either staying at the same weight or even gaining weight. Sometimes you can eat more of these foods than their full-fat versions for the same number of calories. However, sometimes low-fat foods contain more sugar than their full-fat cousins, and hence as many calories per serving. Ultimately, if you eat more calories than your body expends, regardless of whether these calories come from fat, protein, or carbohydrates, you will gain weight. Unused energy is converted and stored as excess body fat. The amount of calories a person needs is based on body weight, age, gender and physical activity level.

Generally, 1200 to 1400 calories per day is considered low, and anything above 2400 is considered too much. To find out how many calories you should be getting a day, check out the MyPlate website (link is external). This USDA-sponsored site will ask you to input your age, gender, weight, height and physical activity level in order to determine what caloric intake will be right for you. You can also check out Ideal Caloric Intake? in the Go Ask Alice! archives for more information on calorie counting.