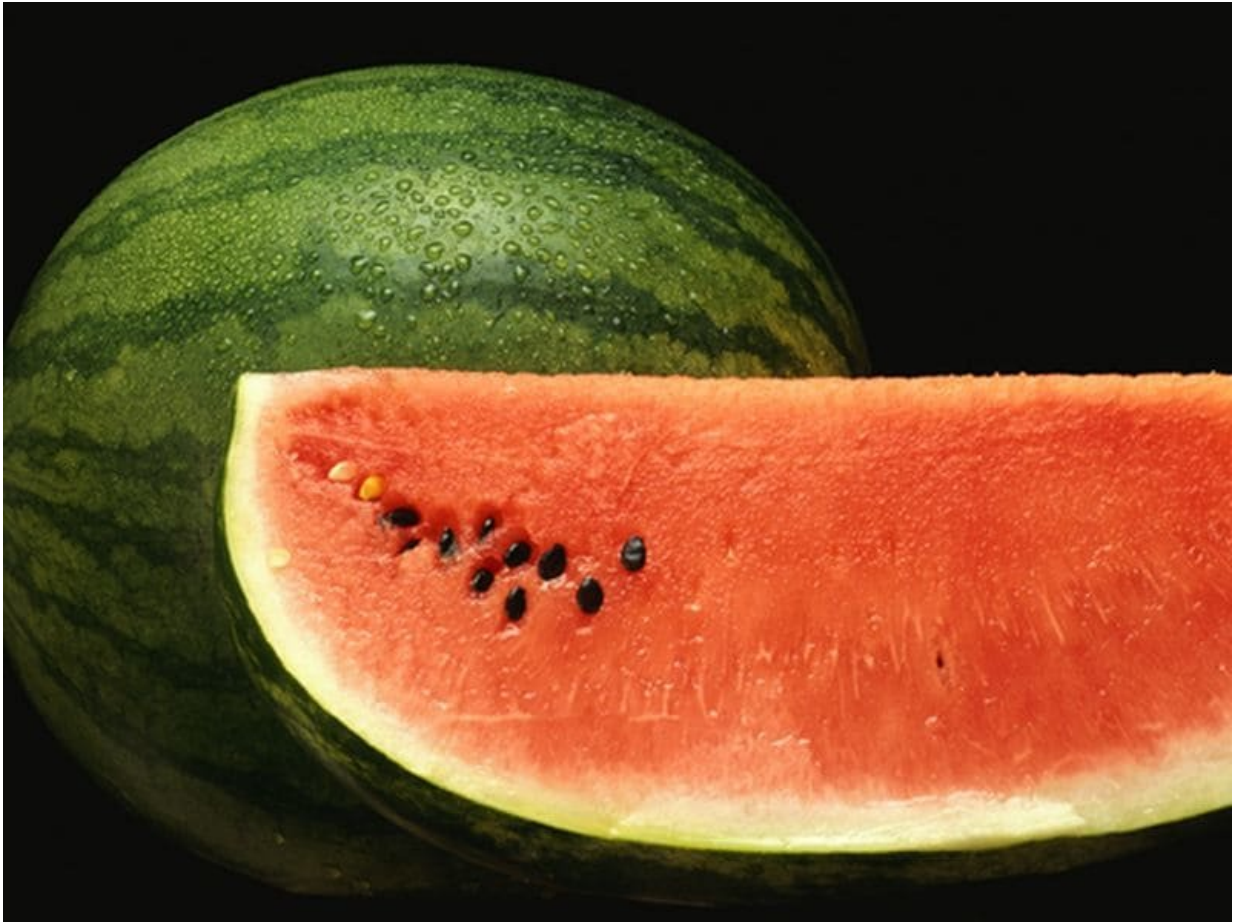


A better way to look at food

January 8 2019, by Len Canter, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—A "low-energy-dense food diet" sounds like just another weight loss fad, but it's an approach with decades of research behind it.

The concept is simple: Eat more foods with a higher water content to get more volume for fewer calories.

Energy density is simply the amount of energy—or calories—in a gram of a food. Foods can be very low-, low-, medium- or high-energy density.

Butter, for instance, is a high-density food with 180 calories in 20 grams. Watermelon is very low, with just 7 calories in 20 grams. Portion size is another way to see the difference. For example, one and a half juicy oranges have the same number of calories as a mere three pretzel rods.

To find a food's energy density, divide the number of calories in a serving by the number of grams in that serving. Energy density ranges in the very low category are from 0.5 to 1 calorie/gram. As you move to the high end, it's from 4 to 9 calories per gram.

You can easily calculate the energy density of any [food](#). Use a calorie counter to do the math for fresh foods. For packaged ones, use the Nutrition Facts Panel and divide the calories by the grams in a portion.

Low-energy density foods are usually high in fiber as well as water, so they're filling. That's one reason why replacing high-energy density foods with low ones to reduce calories is more effective than just cutting portion sizes, which can leave you feeling deprived. Eating low-[energy density](#) foods works equally well for [weight loss](#) and weight maintenance.

In [recipes](#), making the switchover can be as simple as adding more non-starchy vegetables in place of starchy ones, and some of the meat. Rather than eating sandwiches, replace the bread with [leafy greens](#) by putting the sandwich fillings into a big salad. When eating grains, choose foods like oatmeal and quinoa that increase in volume when cooked in

water—they're a lot more filling than dry cereal.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has much more on [the energy density of foods](#) and tips to make substitutions.

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