



Big blubber is watching: The gadget that tells you how many calories you're burning every moment of the day

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Last updated at 7:25 AM on 08th February 2010

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Most of us, from time to time, ponder the weirdness that is other people's weight.

How is it that some girlfriends seem to do very little other than stuff their faces with chips while watching Mad Men yet remain a tiny size 8, while others only have to shuffle past a packet of cheese-and-onion crisps to find them glued to their upper thigh area?

We normally put this down to high metabolic rates or exercise regimes taking place behind closed doors.



Watch your figures: Kathryn Knight tried out the Ki Fit calorie calculator for a week

However, a new device promises to reveal how those cheese toastie eating thinnies really get away with it - and why the rest of us don't.

Described as the 'only multi-sensor media monitor available in the UK', Ki Fit is a highly tuned sensor that you wear on your upper arm and which accurately tracks calories burned and the number of steps you take, as well as the efficiency of your sleep.

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Combined with a personal online account in which you (honestly) log all your food and drink intake, you can then accurately track the number of calories burned against the calories you've consumed: the holy grail of weight loss.

Intrigued, I decide to give it a try for a week.

The device itself is pretty easy to work - you simply attach it to the outside of your upper arm with a Velcro fastening - and then it pretty much looks after itself.

Meanwhile, an online profile allows you to log in all your meals from a pretty comprehensive series of pre-programmed choices, which you can also modify.

Once a day you need to sync the armband with your computer to get the day's report, while a separate beeper, which you can pop in your handbag, allows you to monitor your progress (it shows steps taken, hours of activity and calories burned).

Your daily report includes a series of easy-to-read graphs of your sleep patterns, movements and food intake, which is also broken into a colourful pie-chart showing the percentage of carbs, protein and fat (and also featuring, sadly, for me, a large slice of calories from booze).

Frankly, it was an eye-opener, especially in terms of showing how little some of the usual wisdom about diet and exercise seemed to be borne out by my experiences.

On one day, when I did no proper exercise and spent the night in the pub eating fish and chips, I burned 2,760 calories. On another, when I went to the gym and did a 45-minute workout, I burned 500 less.

A lot of my calories, I realised, are expended not through exercise, but through stressy deadlines and me just generally buzzing around.

I also discovered that I didn't sleep as well as I thought I did, because the device is able to differentiate between time merely lying down and time actually spent sleeping.

Quite often, I was clocking up less than six hours' proper sleep despite being in bed for eight hours and waking unaware that I'd been so restless. It helped explain a lot in terms of general tiredness and irritability (or perhaps I'm just like that all the time).

Of course, there are downsides to having a sort of mini Big Brother permanently attached to your arm (the idea is to wear it 24/7, other than when you take a shower, as it's not waterproof).

On a Saturday night, sporting the Ki Fit armband with a sleeveless halter-neck top led to several people asking if I was wearing an Asbo-style prison tag.

Typing all the food in every day can be a bind, too, while there are also certain inherent flaws with some of the logging in terms of getting accurate quantities (I was at a loss as to what to put in after grazing on cheese nibbles all day). One's own temptation to cheat is also a factor.

Finally, I was conscious that the ability to monitor your calorie burn from minute to minute could become addictive in a way that might not be entirely healthy.

Having said all that, being able to see such accurate calibrations of food and movement is, if used properly, an invaluable tool - certainly it's given me a much better understanding of the way my (slightly toxic) body works.

• The Ki Fit device is available for £99.99, plus £9.99 a month subscription, at www.kiperformance.co.uk

Slim in your sleep

About 60 per cent of our daily calories are burned by our basal metabolic rate - burned just by sleeping, breathing and doing nothing



The device allows the user to track the number of calories burned against the number consumed