

THE SURPRISING PROBLEM WITH CALORIE COUNTING

PART 1: 'CALORIES IN'

Most people who count calories for weight management assume it's an exact science. Here, 5 reasons why tracking the calories in your food is a flawed approach.

1

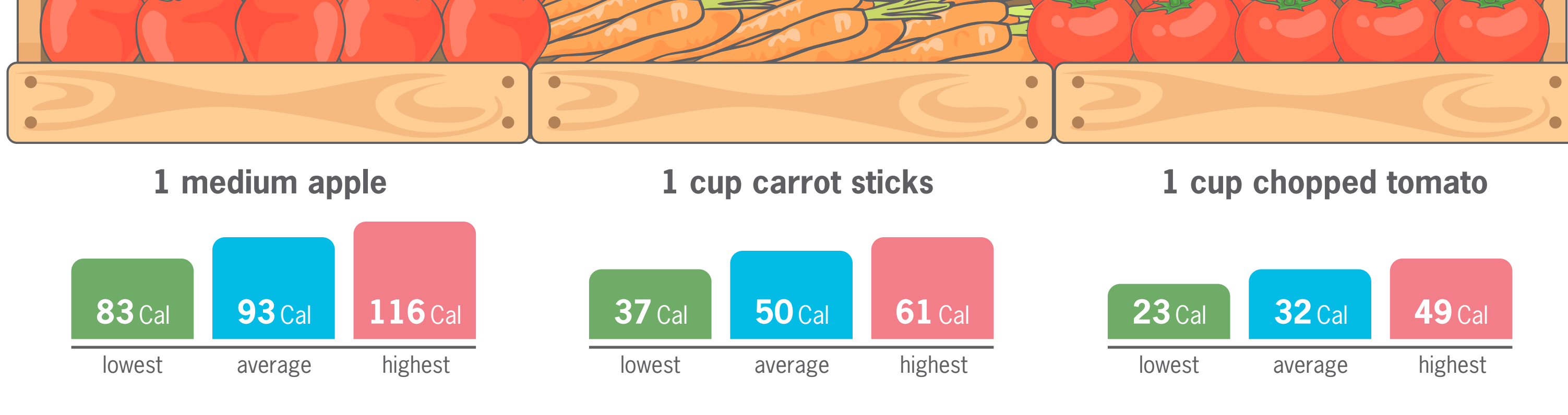
CALORIE COUNTS ARE IMPRECISE.

The calorie counts on food labels and in databases are averages. Research shows that the true calorie content of what you're eating is often significantly higher or lower.

APPLES

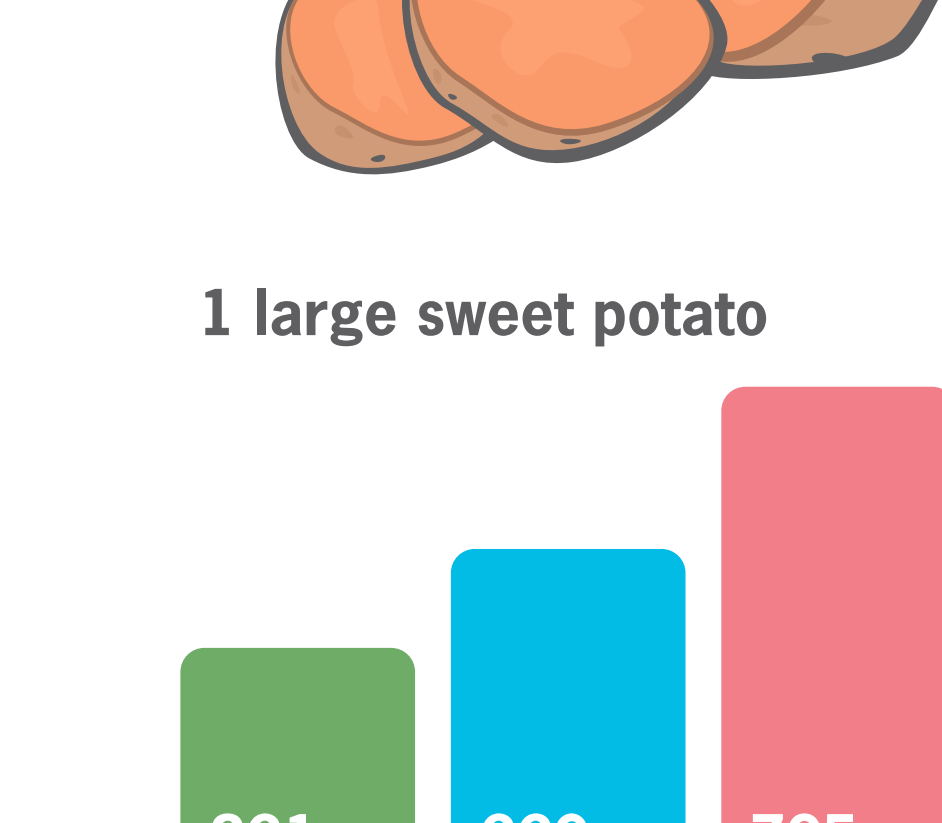
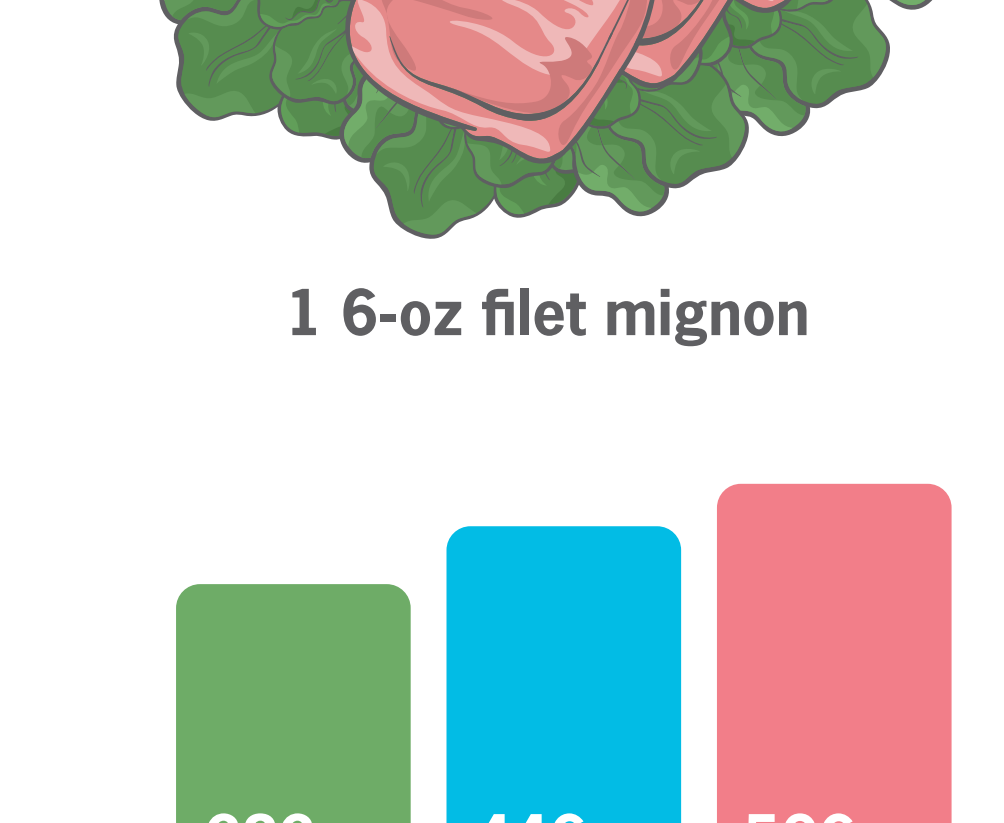
CARROTS

TOMATOES



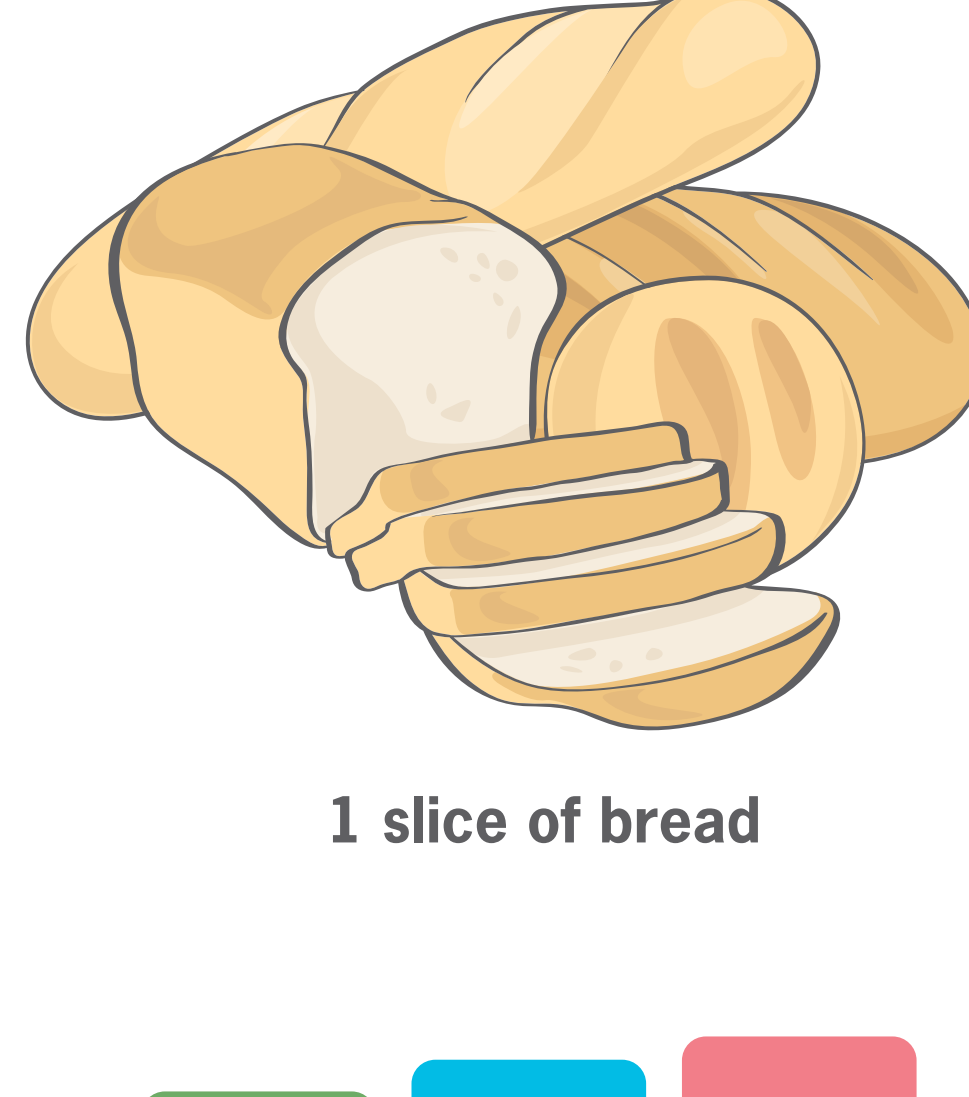
LEAN BEEF LOIN

SWEET POTATO



WHITE BREAD

PEANUTS



Food companies may use any of 5 different methods to estimate calories, so the FDA permits inaccuracies of up to 20%.

So "150 calories" actually means 130-180 calories.

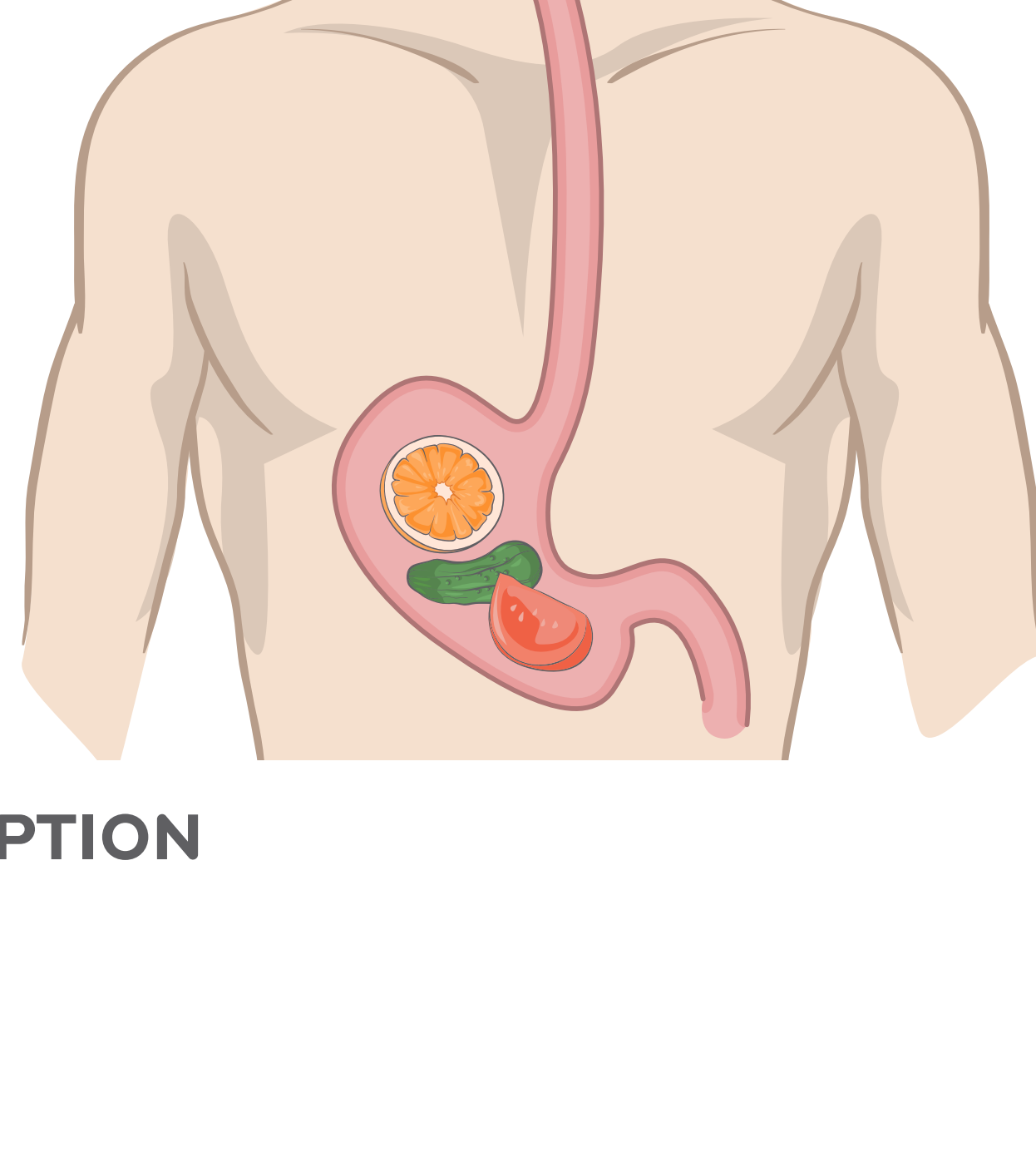
ERROR: UP TO 50%*

2

WE DON'T ABSORB ALL OF THE CALORIES WE CONSUME.

Some calories pass through us undigested, and this varies from food to food.

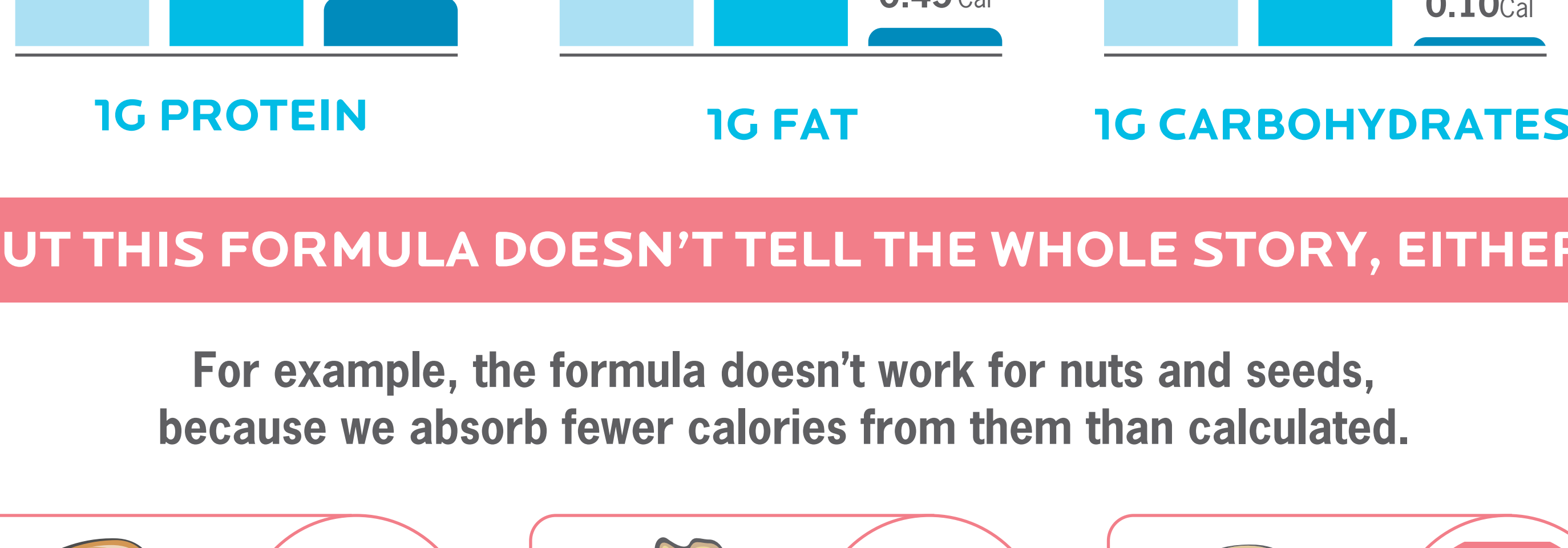
For decades, scientists have used this formula to come up with calorie counts that reflect only what we'll absorb:



● TOTAL CALORIES PER 1 GRAM OF MACRONUTRIENT

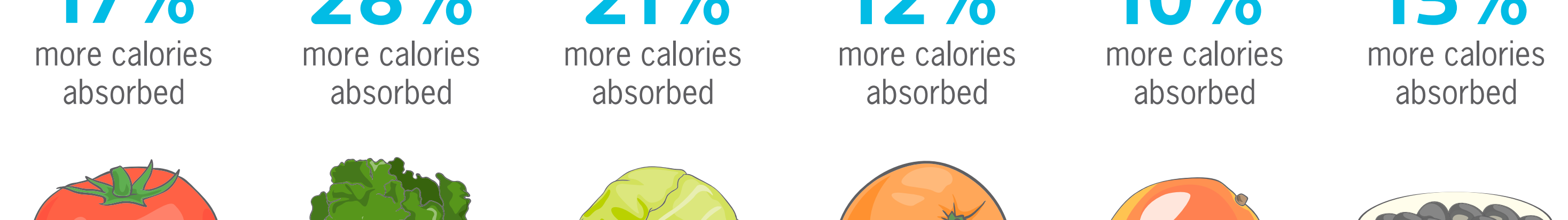
● CALORIES AVAILABLE FOR ABSORPTION

● CALORIES NOT ABSORBED

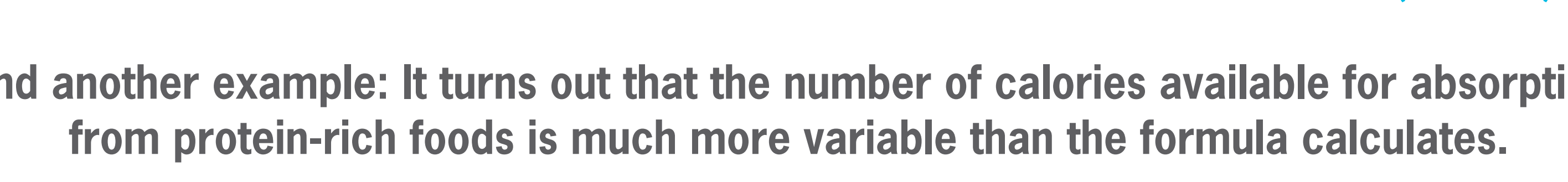


BUT THIS FORMULA DOESN'T TELL THE WHOLE STORY, EITHER.

For example, the formula doesn't work for nuts and seeds, because we absorb fewer calories from them than calculated.



Another example: The formula is wrong about fiber-rich foods.



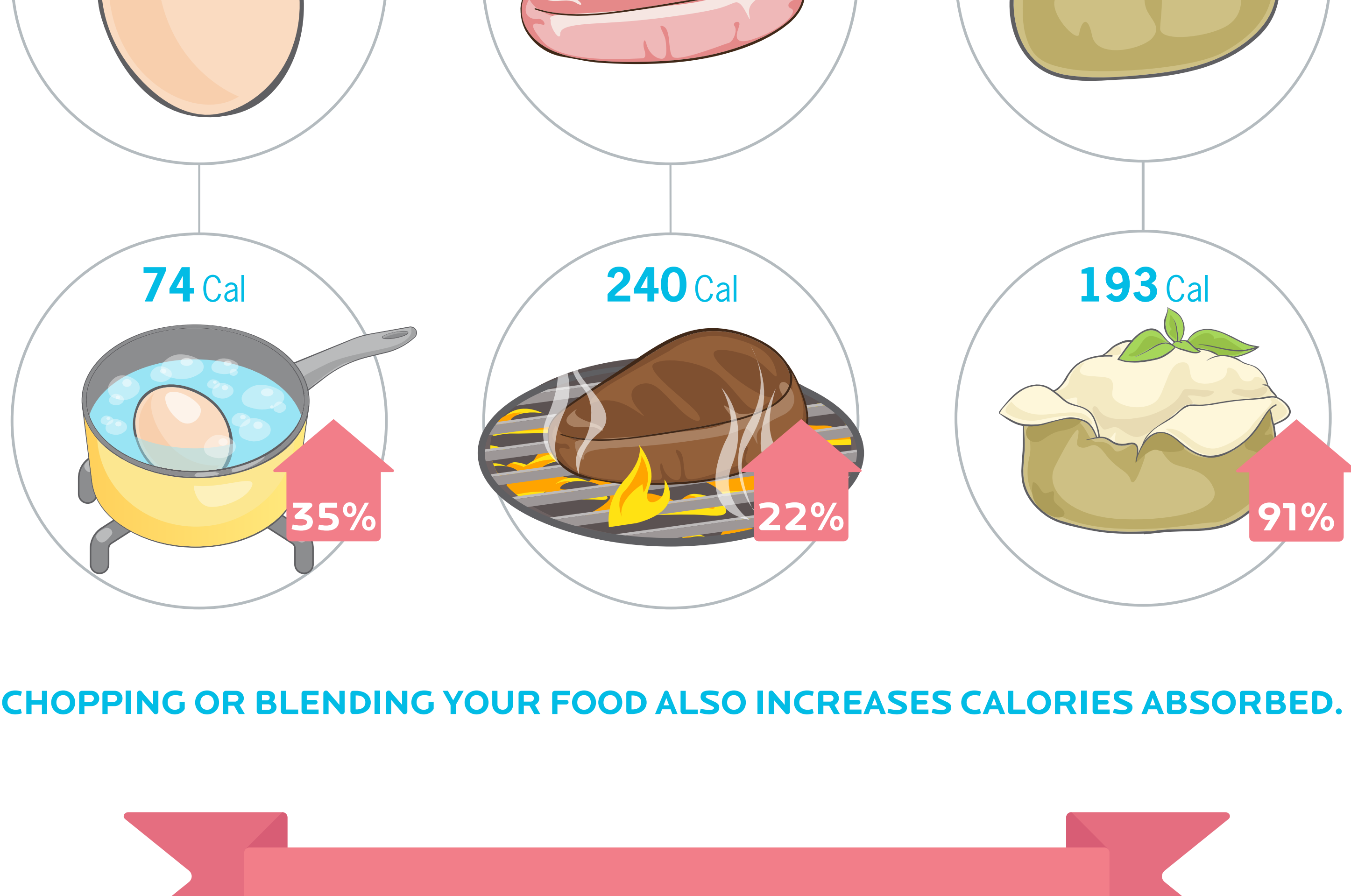
And another example: It turns out that the number of calories available for absorption from protein-rich foods is much more variable than the formula calculates.

ERROR: 10% ON AVERAGE

3

HOW YOU PREPARE FOOD CHANGES ITS CALORIE LOAD.

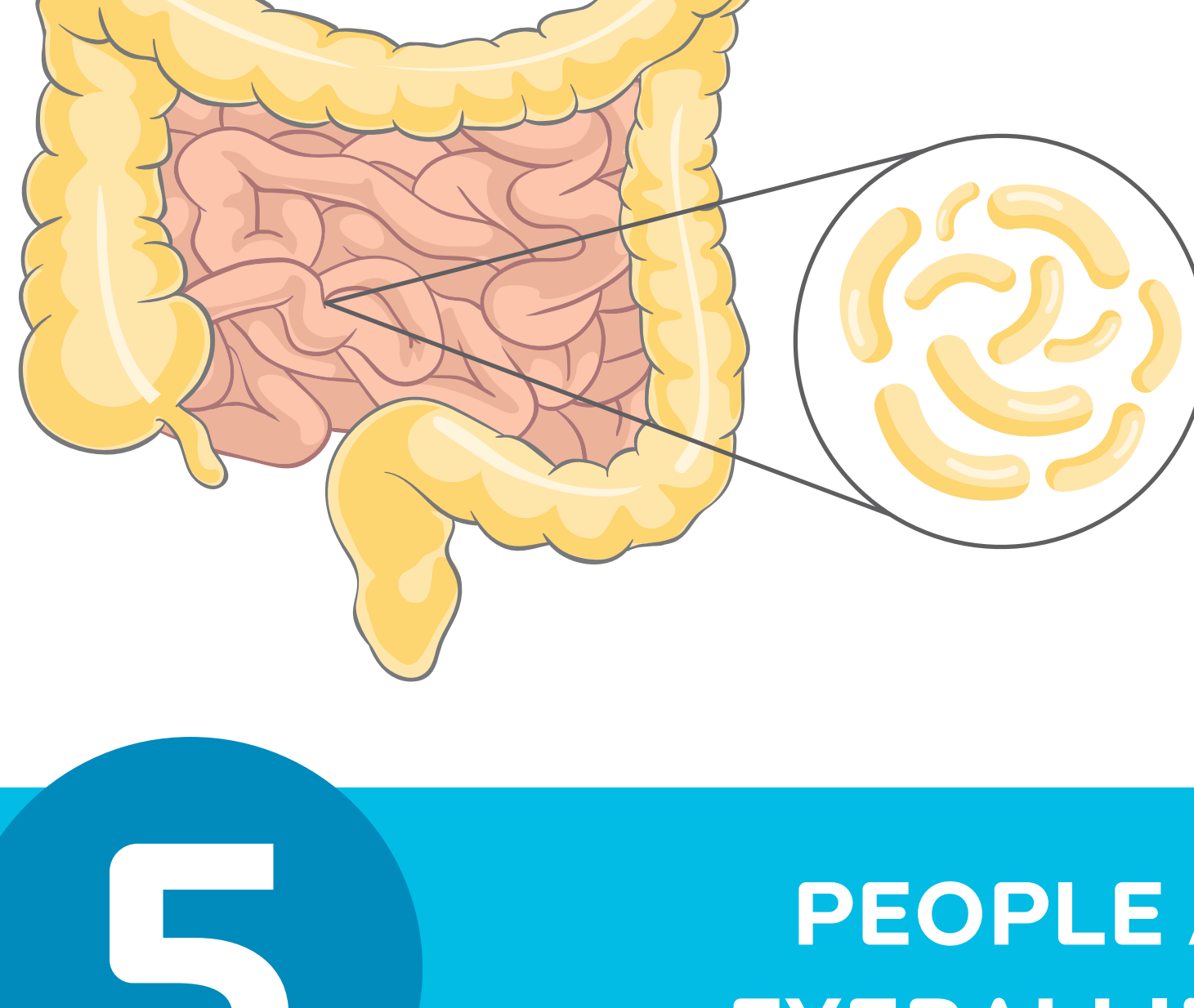
Cooking your food generally makes more of the calories available for absorption, and food labels don't always reflect that.



CHOPPING OR BLENDING YOUR FOOD ALSO INCREASES CALORIES ABSORBED.

INDIVIDUALS ABSORB CALORIES UNIQUELY (AND VARIABLY).

Our own individual gut bacteria can increase or decrease the calories we absorb.



People with a higher proportion of Firmicutes bacteria absorb an average of

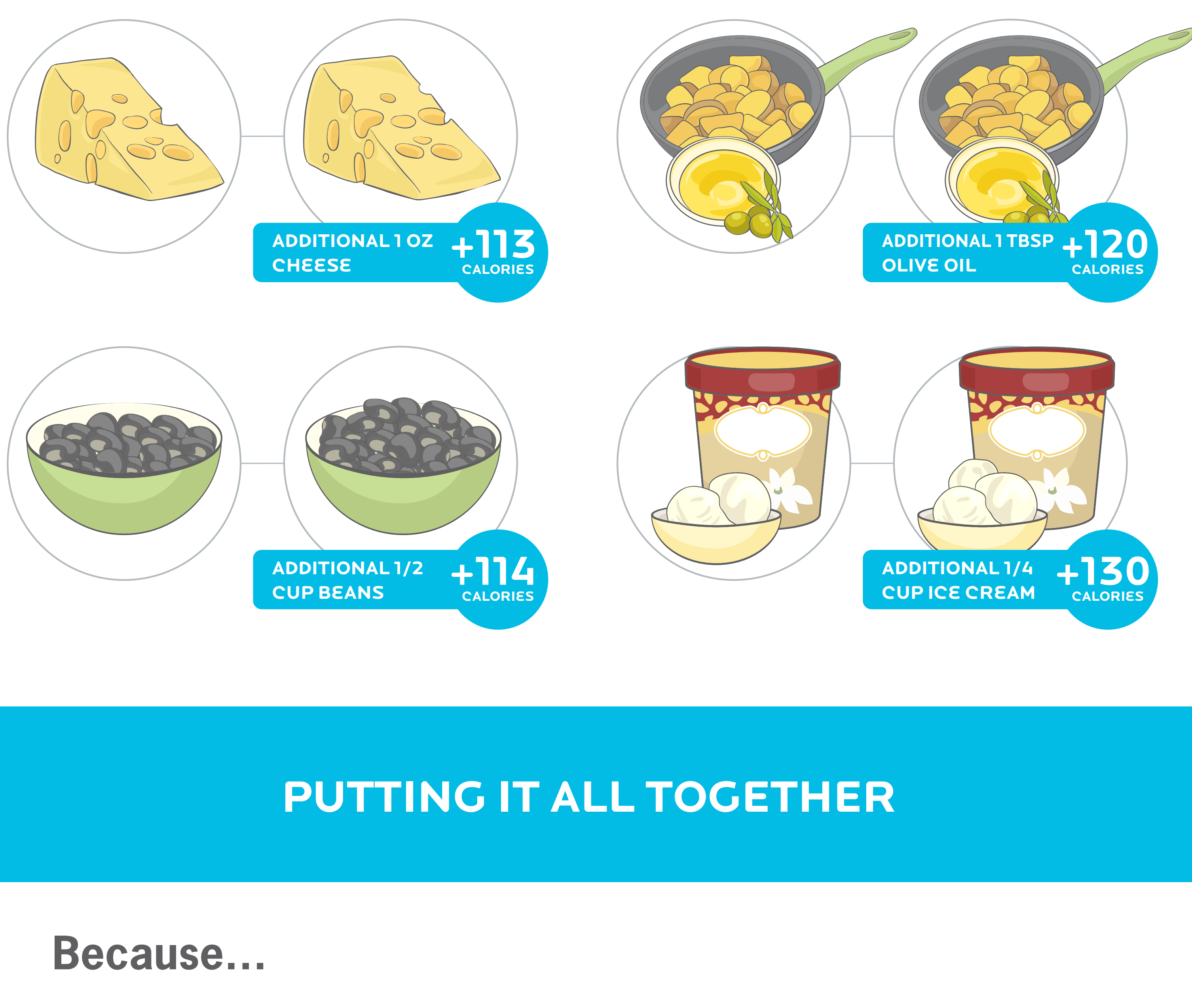
150 PER DAY CALORIES MORE

than those with a higher proportion of Bacteroidetes.

5

PEOPLE AREN'T GREAT AT EYEBALLING PORTION SIZES.

Studies show that people mis-measure portions about two thirds of the time, so it's easy to accidentally consume a lot more calories than you intend to.



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Because...

- Calorie counts are imprecise;
- We don't absorb all of the calories we consume;
- How you prepare food changes its calorie load;
- Individuals absorb calories uniquely and variably; and
- People aren't great at eyeballing portion sizes...

...calorie counting may not be worth the work.

TOTAL ERROR WHEN COUNTING 'CALORIES IN': UP TO 25%

SO, WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

For a much easier portion measurement system, visit www.precisionnutrition.com/calorie-control-guide

*For comprehensive research notes and references, visit www.precisionnutrition.com/problem-with-calorie-counting-calories-in