

Meal Timing

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Identify your mealtime regimen:

- A. "skip breakfast-eat a huge lunch-snack through dinner time"
- B. "pancakes/bacon/eggs/hash browns for breakfast-no room for lunch- gnaw your arm off before you get to dinner"
- C. "small breakfast-no lunch-snack the minute you walk through the door-large dinner"
- D. Breakfast-snack-lunch-snack-dinner-optional snack

If you picked D, bravo! If you picked any of the first three choices, you would fit into the norm. But fitting into the norm does not set you up for weight loss and health success. The norm is overweight, obese, and inactive. The norm is on a diet, striving for decreased poundage in an uneducated and immediate gratification sort of way, getting short-term rewards, then gaining the weight--and then some--back! The norm is not educated about how to eat, when to eat, what to eat, and why food affects them the way it does.

Becoming a weight loss or health success story is not about learning complicated formulas, talking pills or portions, or living on a ranch and exercising six hours a day. Don't get me wrong, I love the Biggest Loser as much as the next person, but it IS possible to lose enormous amounts of unhealthy fat in the comfort of your own home, with consistency and education. Meal timing is one piece of the puzzle that can help you get there.

Time between meals is key to sustained energy throughout the day. I recommend eating at least five times per day. This will vary between individuals based on required intakes; however, eating five times keeps your metabolism fired up and the spacing between meals allows for your body's optimal usage of the calories you do consume.

Your total caloric and protein, carbohydrate, and fat intakes should be timed so that you are getting optimal nutrition before and after your workouts, then divided as evenly as possible throughout the day. Your goal is to eat every 1.5-3 hours and include in your meals all three macronutrients. If you eat the bulk of your carbs at lunch, your body not only will be unable to process all of those carbs before your next meal and will store them as body fat, but you will also have used carbs at lunch that could have been used for your pre and post workout nutrition.

Here's a sample nutrition plan for someone who is eating eight times per day. This will vary based on your schedule, but plan on 3 meals and 2 snacks at the very least.

Notice that each meal has protein, carbs, and fat. And yes, a nighttime snack, if you can fit it in, is fine. The old adage of "you must stop eating after 7pm" is bogus.

4:30 AM- pre workout meal: oatmeal and whey protein

6:00 AM- post workout meal: protein shake + small banana

8:00 AM- toast; egg whites, avocado, tomato, fat free cheese omelet

10:00 AM- snack- yogurt + protein powder

12:30 PM- lunch- chicken breast; broccoli; brown rice

2:30 PM- snack- chicken breast; small apple; tsp peanut butter

5:30 PM- dinner- top sirloin; asparagus; small potato

8:30 PM- snack- cottage cheese

If body fat loss is your goal, as well as functioning optimally throughout your day, take at how you are spacing your food intake. Yes, this takes planning and some energy at the outset to get a sense for what your current patterns are. For long-term leanness and energy though, is it not worth it?