

Time Your Meals to Maintain a Healthy Weight

Did you know eating big meals with nothing in between can actually make it harder to lose weight? Think of your body’s metabolism like a campfire. If you drop an entire armload of logs on a burning fire at once, it will burn fast and then go out. If you feed the fire little by little, you can keep a burn going all day. It works the same with your body and food. It’s best to feed your metabolism a steady, consistent diet throughout the day.

When you eat large meals with many hours in between, your body can only burn so much at one time. Your body then stores the rest (in the form of fat) and your metabolism slows down between meals. Having a small meal or snack consisting of 2-4 ounces of healthy protein, carbohydrates and fat will help stabilize your blood sugar and keep your metabolism going, so you burn more calories over the course of a day.



Take a moment to consider your own meal timing. Fill out the chart below:

| Breakfast | Snack | Lunch | Snack | Dinner | Snack |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| What time eaten: | What time eaten: | What time eaten: | What time eaten: | What time eaten: | What time eaten: |

Consider timing your meals like this example:

| Breakfast | Snack | Lunch | Snack | Dinner | Snack |
|--|---|---|--|---|--|
| 1 hour after waking up (i.e., waking up at 7 am, eating breakfast at 8 am) | 2 hours after breakfast (i.e., snack at 10 am) | 2 hours after snack (i.e., lunch at 12 pm) | 2 hours after lunch (i.e., snack at 3 pm) | 3 hours after lunch (i.e., dinner at 6 pm) | 3 hours before bedtime (i.e., 8 pm) |

Tips for timing your meals:

- Frequent eating doesn’t mean snacking. Avoid munching mindlessly. Make each mini-meal complete — with a serving of healthy vegetables/fruit, protein and fat, such as an apple, slice of turkey and a handful of almonds.
- If you have medical conditions, consult your personal physician prior to following any meal schedule.
- Breakfast stands for “breaking the fast;” your first meal should be eaten within one hour of waking up.
- It’s also a good idea to have your last mini-meal three hours before bedtime to give your body time to digest.