



## **Eat More (Often) Weigh Less**

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**It really does sound like a paradox, but eating more often can help you shed extra weight. Why? Because eating 5 small meals a day helps maintain a stable insulin and blood sugar level, which in turn sets in motion key changes to your body to help you lose weight and have more energy. Here are changes you can expect from eating 5 small meals a day:**

### **1. Less stored fat**

Eating 5 meals per day prevents the body from releasing excess insulin and storing as fat the calories your body doesn't need. Insulin is a fat-storage hormone, and the more insulin your body releases from larger meals, more of your calories will get stored as fat. By eating more frequently, you get the amount of food your body can use as energy right away.

### **2. More Energy All Day Long**

Eating 5 meals a day makes you feel more energized and less sluggish. One of the main complaints I hear from my patients is feeling tired a lot. By eating more often you get a regular stream of nutrients to convert to energy so your blood sugar levels stay steady and you stay energized. You also get an extra energy boost by eating protein at all 5 meals. Here's why: Tyrosine, one of the amino acids in protein, can increase your mental alertness and energy by elevating the brain chemicals dopamine and norepinephrine. Eating protein 5 times per day, instead of 2 or 3, releases these chemicals more often for energy all day. People who snack on just pretzels or fruit lose the protein plus.

### **3. Faster Metabolism**

Every time you eat, your body uses up a certain amount of energy – calories – digesting, absorbing, metabolizing and storing your meal. In fact, about 5 to 15% of your total calories are spent on digestion alone. It's called the "thermic effect

of food.” The more often you eat, the more often your metabolism revs up to process food. Keep your metabolism going by timing your meals so that you are eating every 3 to 4 hours. Then, just as your metabolism begins to slow down, more food will rev it up again. Of course, this method assumes that the *total* amount of calories you are consuming is appropriate for weight loss.

#### **4. Mood Improvement**

Many people don't associate the agitation, depressed/irritable mood, and low energy they feel during the day as low blood sugar, but my experience with patients tells me that this is often the case. When we don't eat frequently enough (and in proper amounts) to keep our blood sugar steady, low blood sugar saps energy and leaves you feeling tired and with a depressed mood. Low blood sugar also makes it more likely that you will *overeat* at the next eating opportunity. I see this most frequently during the afternoon. If lunch is at noon and dinner is not until 6 or 7 pm, depressed/tired/irritable moods tend to hit around 3 or 4 pm (vending machine time!). Go ahead and have a snack, just make sure it is a healthy, protein-containing snack.

#### **5. Reduced Stress**

The more stressful your life is, the higher your odds of being overweight. When you experience chronic stress, your body releases a hormone called cortisol that can stimulate appetite. A Yale University study suggests that people dealing with chronic stress are more likely to develop excess fat around their waistlines – the most unhealthy kind of fat. The study noted that there are more cortisol-sensitive receptors within fat cells in your belly than elsewhere in the body. Taking the time for a break to enjoy some nourishing, blood-sugar stabilizing, delicious food isn't just healthy for your body, it's also healthy for your mind.



## The 5 Components of a Healthy Meal or Snack

- 1. Protein:** It helps raise metabolism because it has a high thermic effect of food - roughly double that of carbs or fat. It takes more calories to digest/metabolize than either carbs or fat. Protein also takes *longer* to digest than carbohydrates do, so they stay with you longer and help keep blood sugar more steady.
- 2. Low-to-moderate glycemic index (GI) foods:** The glycemic index is a measure of how quickly food digests and increases blood sugar. Low GI foods take longer to digest than those with a high GI score. Low GI foods include vegetables, whole grains, beans, lentils, oatmeal, sweet potatoes and wild rice. These are the “good carbohydrates.” High GI foods include “white carbs” like white bread, white rice and pasta, pastries, candy, etc. When foods digest quickly, blood sugar spikes and drops again very quickly leaving you hungry, tired and agitated soon after eating. Low GI foods help make sure your brain produces enough of the chemical serotonin, which helps regulate mood and appetite so you avoid emotional highs and lows.
- 3. Fiber:** It slows down digestion and the release of glucose into the bloodstream so your blood sugar stays on an even keel. Most high-fiber foods are low on the glycemic index. Fiber also absorbs some of the fat, cholesterol and calories from the food you eat and discards it through the waste system. So eating more fiber means you actually absorb less fat, cholesterol and calories every time you eat. That small change can really add up over time. Studies show that people who eat more fiber have an easier time losing and maintaining weight loss. Try to get at least 5-10 grams of fiber at every meal and snack. You can also begin meals and snacks with a tsp. of Fiber Sure, Benefiber, Metamucil or Fiber Choice and an 8-oz glass of water. It’s a great way to feel fuller on fewer calories.
- 4. Healthy Fats:** Fats like the monounsaturated fats found in nuts, avocados, olive and canola oil and the omega-3 fats found in salmon, flaxseed and walnut oil help you feel fuller longer, as well as help you absorb vitamins A, D, E and K. Fats provide energy and good taste to foods as well, so aim for 25-30% of calories from fat and get a little good fat at each meal and snack.
- 5. Sugar-Free Beverages:** Low-calorie and sugar-free beverages provide the hydration you need for health and digestion and help keep you full. Many people mistake dehydration for hunger and eat when their body really needs fluid. Aim for 8-12 ounces per meal and at least 64 ounces per day.