

Adapted from Have a Plant: Fruits & Veggies for Better Health
<https://fruitsandveggies.org/stories/about-the-buzz-eating-late-is-making-you-fat/>



<https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/wellness/5-strategies-to-end-late-night-snack>

The Common Buzz:

Eating most of your calories in the evening will make you gain weight because you don't have time to burn them off before going to bed.

What We Know:

Eating late won't cause you to gain weight as long as the number of calories you eat during the day is not more than the calories you burn.

Foods have the same calories at 10 PM as they do at 6 PM. Weight gain won't occur unless you are consuming more calories in your day than you are burning off. However, eating late gets a bad "buzz" because most likely that nighttime eating tends to be snacking rather than sitting down for a regular meal. Unfortunately, lots of snack foods are low in nutrition but high in calories.

It's easy to grab a large bag of chips and sit in front of the TV, with the intentions of just munching on a few. But next thing you know, you are reaching for the crumbs at the bottom of the bag. Mindless snacking in front of the TV (or other devices) can push calorie intake over the top.

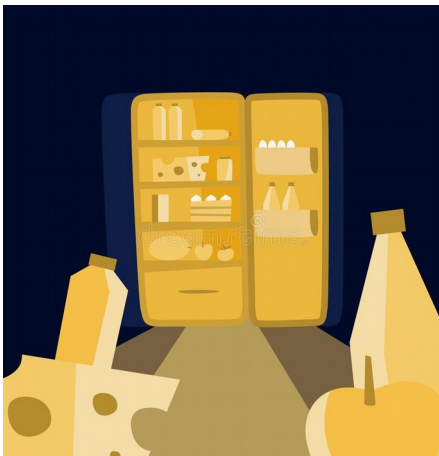


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How Do We Know This for Sure?

You have a set number of calories your body needs to maintain your current weight. For example, let's say that you can eat 1,800 calories a day and your weight remains the same. If you consumed extra calories at any time throughout the day, without adding more physical activity, you will gain weight from those extra calories that exceed 1,800 calories, not from the time of day that you consumed them.

The reason people say we gain weight from eating at night is because most people consume *more* calories when they are eating later in the day. Many studies have shown that people report that the hardest time of day for controlling their food intake is between dinner and bedtime. So, the reason you may gain from eating at this time is because you ate *too many calories*, not because your body doesn't process them in the same way.



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Lets Look at What the Research Says:

Studies have indicated that the way food calorie intake is distributed may affect hunger levels—and in response, could affect weight gain.

For instance, in a 1999 study from the journal *Appetite*, researchers found that when lean, healthy men distributed their meals throughout the day, instead of eating larger meals less frequently, their hunger decreased. Other research has shown that people who skip breakfast, or postpone eating for the first time until later in the day, are more likely to overeat later.

Unless you are a night shift worker or work out at night, our metabolism slows down as we prepare for sleep which means we are burning fewer calories through physical activity at night, too.

What Happens to Your Body When You Skip Meals?

- Skipping meals, or going for long periods without eating, puts your body in a low fuel state. This may cause your metabolism to slow down to preserve energy. This may also make the body more sensitive to the calories that come later, and more likely to store those calories as fat and not use them for energy. Skipping meals often leads to eating larger meals later on to make up for the energy deficit.
- Skipping meals is probably more of a problem than night eating. People who skip breakfast often shift their caloric intake to later in the day, eating the majority of their daily calories at night. The key is to eat balanced meals throughout the day to spread out your energy intake to provide consistent fuel for your body.



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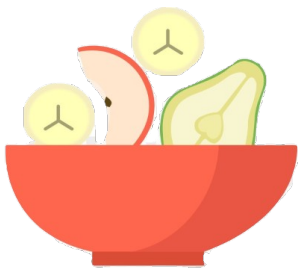
Note: Many people may think that they don't "eat" breakfast or lunch because they are only consuming coffee. However, upon investigation it has been found that people drink about 100-200 calories of sugar, honey and fat that are added into their coffee or tea, which means they actually "drank" their breakfast. A better breakfast drink and/or coffee additive could be a low calorie/high protein drink, or Stevia and a low-fat milk.

- If you are eating healthful, regular sized meals and snacks during the day, a late meal probably won't be a problem as long as you keep the meal size sensible. However, if you feel stuffed at bedtime, you may have gone too long without eating, resulting in overeating.

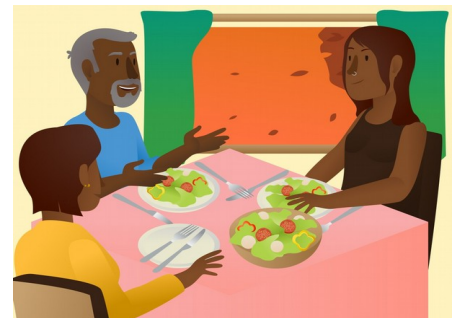
Advice for Late Night Eating:

Tip #1 Deter the Urge.

There's nothing wrong with sitting down to a family dinner a bit on the late side, but eating breakfast, lunch, and a small healthy snack between meals during the day will most likely deter the urge to eat an overly-large dinner and/or a high-calorie snack in the evening. Portioned out nuts, fruits, and vegetables are great healthy snacks that will help you feel less hungry.



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<https://foodandhealth.com/benefits-of-family-meals/>

Tip # 2 After or Before Dinner Snacks.

Try having a healthy snack before or after dinner, like a cup of herbal tea or soup, salad, raw veggies and peanut butter or hummus, nuts, fruit, or low fat cheese. Respect your hunger! Eat Mindfully. Take a minute to ask yourself, what kind of "hunger" is this?

Tip #3 Make A Plan.

If you find you're still grazing after dinner, it may be beneficial to select a time to stop eating and plan what you'll eat. Take a look at what time you usually have dinner and decide how much food is reasonable to have between then and bedtime. The more you plan ahead, the easier it will be to control your calorie intake.

Work with your RDN and use a meal planning app that includes a calorie counting tracker to determine your daily needs and actual intake.



<http://www.thepeace.world/>