

Strive To Thrive

Pathways... Leading the way to a better feeling you!

Eat More Often, Lose More Weight

By: Liza Barnes &
Nicole Nichols

You may have heard some nutrition and weight loss experts say that people should eat "mini meals" every two to three hours, or four to six times per day. Proponents of this idea claim that eating small meals throughout the day can lower cholesterol, promote weight loss, improve energy levels, boost metabolism, and preserve lean muscle mass. "It sounds good in theory, but there isn't much proof to back most of these claims," says Becky Hand, a Registered and Licensed Dietitian. There is research to support at least one of these claims: In a 2001 study published in *The British Medical Journal*, researchers found that people who ate six small meals a day had a 5 percent lower average cholesterol level than people who ate one or two larger meals.

What about weight loss and metabolism benefits? Hand says that research analysts from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics have synthesized years of research on adult weight management to form nutrition guidelines. One topic they've analyzed is the effect of regular meal and snack patterns on weight loss. "Several studies show that eating four to five times per day (meals or snacks) is associated with reduced or no obesity risk," she says. The research also shows that the three squares a day could actually hurt your efforts to reach and/or maintain a healthy weight. "Eating less than three meals or snacks per day may increase the risk of obesity," says Hand. "But the risk goes up when people eat six or more times per day, too."

Physiologically, it does make sense: "When you eat regularly throughout the day, your body knows that more food is on the way, and it's more likely to burn the calories you consume than store them as fat," Hand

explains. She also says that eating at regular intervals may help stabilize blood sugar and energy levels. But as far as the rest of the health claims are concerned, well-researched proof is lacking. So, while eating more often throughout the day appears to help with weight control, it "could potentially benefit your health, but not necessarily," says Hand.

If five to six meals a day sounds appealing to you, try it. If not, stick with what works for you, but don't stress. Enjoying three squares a day is a perfectly healthy way to eat, and there are far more important things you can focus on, besides meal frequency: like how much food you're eating in general. One thing to try, if you don't snack mid-morning and mid-afternoon, is to incorporate small snacks along with your three daily meals—but watch that you don't exceed your calorie allotment for the day.

If you decide to delve into the world of mini meals, here are some things to consider:

- Eating more often isn't for everyone. If you have trouble stopping eating once you start, you may wind up overeating. "A lot of people with emotional eating problems just end up eating even more when they attempt to eat several mini meals," says Dean Anderson, a SparkPeople fitness coach and behavior psychology expert. "If your mini meals turn into large meals, or you have problems with discipline or portion control, then eating more often during the day might have negative consequences for you." You don't have to cook several times a day. Do you find yourself wondering, "Who has the time to cook six meals?" One simple solution is to cook "regular" sized meals, and split them in half. Stick the other half in the fridge and eat it when you feel hungry later. And your "meals" can look more like "snacks," which can be easier to put together (see sample meal plan be-

low).

Learn what hunger really feels like. Some people get crabby and others get uncomfortable hunger pangs. As soon as you notice your body's hunger signals, make sure you eat within an hour. Irregular eating patterns and skipped meals can confuse your body and mess up your metabolism. Plus, if you wait until you're feeling ravenous, you may be more likely to overeat. Eating more often may help curb hunger. Many people who follow a reduced-calorie weight loss plan struggle with hunger," says Anderson. "But eating more frequently throughout the day can help with feelings of fullness and satiety, so you're more likely to stick with your plan." If hunger is an issue for you, examine how often you're eating. You may be better off eating less per meal, but eating more meals throughout the day.

Eat balanced meals for the best results. Your mini meals should be nutritionally balanced, containing complex carbohydrates, lean protein, and healthy fats. Each meal should be about half the size of a "normal" (3-meals-a-day-sized) meal. So when you eat these "mini meals," you take in the same calorie and nutrients by the end of the day, just with different timing. Meet your calorie range by the end of the day. You should also meet your body's needs for all other key nutrients like protein, vitamins and minerals. One good way to do this is to decide how many meals you want to eat and divide your calorie goal by that number to find out how many calories each of your meals should contain. (So if you eat 1,800 calories per day, divide 1,800 by 6 to get 300, which means you'll eat six 300-calorie meals that day). You can do this with other nutrients, too, to get an idea of how much you need of certain things from each meal. (If you

need 60 grams of protein each day, for example, then aim for 10 grams per meal.)

This is what a *sample day of mini meals might look like, based on a 1,800-calorie diet.

7:30 am - 1/2 cup unsweetened juice; 1 slice whole wheat toast with 2 tsp margarine and spreadable fruit; 1 hardboiled egg (Nutrition Total: 320 calories; 44g carbs; 10g protein; 12g fat)

10 am - 2 oz of natural cheese thinly sliced on 4 saltine crackers; 1 piece of fresh fruit; water/tea (Nutrition Total: 325 calories; 59g carbs; 15g protein, 19g fat)

12:30 pm - 2 oz of turkey breast on whole wheat bagel with lettuce leaf and 2 slices of fresh tomato with 1 tablespoon of spicy brown mustard; 1 medium banana; 1/2 cup of 1% milk or soy milk (Nutrition Total: 405 calories; 76g carbs; 18g protein; 3g fat)

3 pm - 1/2 cup of sugar free pudding; 4 vanilla wafers; 1/2 cup of 1% milk or soy milk (Nutrition Total: 211 calories; 30g carbs; 7g protein; 7g fat)

6 pm - 2 oz of falafel with whole wheat pita halves; 1/2 cup of broccoli; water/tea (Nutrition Total: 386 calories; 60g carbs; 16g protein; 12g fat)

8 pm - 1 oz almonds; 1/2 cup of unsweetened juice (Nutrition Total: 222 calories; 20g carbs; 6g protein; 14g fat)

*Sample meal plan created by Tanya Jolliffe, SparkPeople healthy eating expert.

HEALTHY ROUTINE FOR DECEMBER:

Wake up at the same time every morning and DON'T hit the snooze button!

How to Make Yourself Work Out When It's Dark Out

By: Nicole Nichols

As much as I love fall, I don't love the darkness that comes with it. It's already getting darker earlier each night, and it's staying dark even when I wake up in the morning. I am not a fan of that!

It's hard enough to be a morning person and wake up to work out, but when the moon is still out when your alarm goes off, forget about it!

I will admit that it's not easy for me to get up and be gung ho for a workout session. I am not and never will be a morning person. It's hard for me to wake up just about every day. But I do manage to stick to my morning workouts (most days anyway). And no, I don't have super human powers ... which means you can do it, too. Here's how.

1. Go to bed at a normal time. I'm

naturally sleepier in the fall and winter, probably because of it gets dark so much earlier. When I know I'm going to wake up and work out, I make sure I get to bed early enough that I get 8 hours of sleep. Does it mean skipping "Conan"? Yep. Is it worth it? Oh heck, yes.

2. Sleep in your workout clothes. I kid you not, this is my No. 1 strategy for making morning exercise a habit—especially in the fall and winter. When it's chilly, I don't want to get out of the covers or change into workout clothes. Plus, it saves me precious time in the morning. And honestly when you're already dressed, you're taking one less obstacle out of the way. Do it.

3. Have a plan. Know exactly what you plan to do for your workout when you go to bed the night before. Whether it's a run, walk, DVD or class, have a plan in place. That way, you're not lying there in

the morning trying to figure it out. Lay out your gear, equipment, gym bag and whatever else you'll need the night before, too. Plus when you know what you're going to do (such as run 3 miles), you know exactly how much time it takes (30 minutes plus time to stretch), and it keeps you punctual in the morning to make it happen.

4. Don't hit snooze. Period. If you're a chronic snooze-button user, place your clock on the other side of the room so that you have to get out of bed to turn it off. Better yet, turn on the lights right away and turn on some heart-pumping music to help yourself wake up.

5. Play your get-up-and-go music. We all know how music affects our mind and body in a positive way. It can change your mood, give you energy, and motivate you to reach higher. Play those tunes in the morning that

remind you of your goals and why you're doing this in the first place. And make music the soundtrack to your morning workouts so that you can be fierce and push yourself to the very end.

6. Don't make it a choice. Put simply, the big difference between those who get up and get it done and those who keep sleeping and feel guilty later is that morning exercisers Just Do. It. It's not optional. It's not "Oh, if I feel like it, I'll wake up and work out tomorrow." They make the decision the night before. And when it's time to wake up and go, that's that. No fights. No compromising. No negotiation. It's just something that they do. And you have just as much power to make that happen, too. I remember my goals and why I'm working out in the a.m. (it's the only time I can really make it fit) and that's enough to make me do it, whether it's in darkness or in light.

Adapted from sparkpeople.com

Peanut Butter Banana Wrap

A great meal or snack!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Whole Grain Tortillas
- 2 Tbsp of Peanut Butter
- 1 Small Banana Sliced
- 1 tbsp honey

PREPARATION

1. Spread peanut butter on tortillas
2. Arrange sliced banana and strawberries in single layer then drizzle with honey.
3. Wrap up and eat!

NUTRITION

- Servings Per Recipe: 1
- Calories: 496.8
- Total Fat: 21.0 g
- Cholesterol: 0.0 mg
- Sodium: 461.9 mg
- Total Carbs: 72.0 g
- Dietary Fiber: 8.5 g
- Protein: 13.1 g



Sparkrecipes.com



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Pathways' Strive for Five Mission Statement:

Pathways' Strive for Five Program is dedicated to helping consumers living with mental illness to achieve a higher quality of life by enhancing one's nutritional awareness and helping consumers to become more active. Pathways understands that our consumers will be able to live longer, happier, and healthier lives by providing them with the tools, knowledge and resources any person would need to achieve a physically and mentally well-balanced life.