

NUTRITION MYTH #1:

SKIPPING MEALS IS A GOOD WAY TO MANAGE YOUR WEIGHT

Although many weight conscious individuals contend skipping meals is the best way to manage one's weight, it may be one of the worst. **A "fast-all-day, feast-all-night" eating pattern is often seen in overweight individuals. Skipping breakfast and/or lunch usually results in people being so ravenously hungry when dinner rolls around that they eat significantly more than they would have if they had eaten during the day. Furthermore, when overwhelming hunger strikes, people typically grab whatever food is available, rather than preparing a healthy, well-balanced meal.** The cycle continues the following day when these guilt ridden calorie counters wake up with fresh resolve and minimal hunger, only to once again skip meals early in the day, and stuff themselves later in the evening. **Eating regular, well timed meals (including breakfast) helps stabilize blood sugar, which in turn quells hunger, and helps people control their weight.**

Breakfast is important for other reasons as well. **Study after study has shown that people who eat breakfast are way ahead of breakfast skippers when it comes to nutrient intake. Breakfast eaters also come out on top in terms of mental and physical performance thanks to a better blood glucose (sugar) level.** It turns out your brain and nerve cells require glucose for energy, so low blood sugar impairs your ability to think and react.

For optimal energy and better weight control eat more meals not fewer. If it has been over 3 hours since your last meal, and your next one is at least an hour away it is time for a healthy snack. Snack food needn't be synonymous with junk food. Use snacks to help round out your diet by eating the foods your body needs more of. Be a savvy snacker: combine fruit, vegetables, or whole grains (pretzels, tortilla chips, bread) with some lean protein for an A+ snack.

A CLOSER LOOK AT SKIPPING MEALS: A CALORIE-WISE, POUND-FOOLISH WAY TO MANAGE YOUR WEIGHT

According to Barry Miller, M.D., a nationally recognized obesity specialist and medical director of the McLaren Hospital Optifast Weight Management Clinic in Flint Michigan, many chronic weight watchers starve themselves into obesity. How can that be? There are a variety of physiological and psychological factors that account for this seemingly paradoxical observation.

1. Skipping meals signals the body that a famine is eminent. Your body responds by decreasing its calorie needs by 150 to 200 calories per day. (How many pounds will you gain each month if you cut your calorie needs by 200 calories per day, but don't change your energy expenditure?) Concurrently, your body produces more lipase, a fat storage enzyme, to ensure that you don't deplete your fat reserves too quickly.

2. When people become physiologically famished their body craves calorie dense foods. People who stick to a nighttime eating pattern typically eat in excess of 2000 calories a day - too much for the average sedentary American to lose weight.

3. After denying themselves food all day, nighttime nibblers reward themselves for their resistance. Once they get their minds into the reward mode it diminishes their resistance to overeating.

Source: Dr. Virginia Lee Mermel, PhD, CNS, CLC. She received her PhD in Nutritional Biochemistry with minors in exercise physiology and physiological chemistry from the University of California-Davis in 1983. Her MS degree, also from UC-Davis, is in nutrition. She is a board certified Human Nutrition Specialist (CNS), and also holds a Lifestyle Counselor Certification (CLC) from the LEARN Institute, a teaching division of the Cooper Institute for Aerobic Research (an internationally recognized leader in the field of weight management research).

NUTRITIONAL MYTH #2: WATER - THE LESS YOU DRINK THE LESS YOU WEIGH

The typical consumer has many misconceptions about the role water plays in body weight. In part these faulty ideas have been promoted by over-the-counter products designed to rapidly reduce weight, or the bloating many women experience just before their period begins. In actuality, **the more water you drink (within reason), the less likely your body is to retain water. Drinking too little water tells the body that a drought may be imminent; hence it holds onto as much water as it can by concentrating your urine, and reabsorbing as much water as possible from feces prior to defecation.** Drinking sufficient water allows your body to flush toxins from your tissues and free itself of excess water.

Both beverages and food provide your body with water. Regardless of their other constituents all beverages are primarily water. Most foods also provide water. Fruits and vegetables are obvious sources. Water is available from less apparent sources also, such as pasta, rice, and oatmeal, which absorb water while cooking.

Despite the numerous potential sources of water in your diet pure water is still the best source of dietary water. Most of us can remember having drunk a soda, juice or coffee and still feeling thirsty. These beverages add fluid to the body but they also add solutes (sugar, salt, and various chemicals) that must be diluted as they enter the blood stream. Your body dilutes these solutes by pulling fluid from your cells into your bloodstream.

Caffeine- and alcohol-containing beverages present your body with another type of challenge. In addition to any solutes, these beverages contain caffeine and alcohol, which dehydrates your body by affecting the hormones that regulate your body's fluid

balance. Your body responds by producing extra urine. So that cup of coffee you have in the morning may take more body fluid with it than it supplies.

At the very least, people need a little over a quart of water each day just to replenish the amount lost in urine, feces, sweat, and from the lungs during respiration. **A minimum of two quarts per day is optimal intake under average conditions but this amount can increase in very warm weather, during intense prolonged exercise,** and by various physiological changes brought about by disease, medications or even natural physiological alternations such as pregnancy and lactation.

Providing you do not drink a lot of caffeine- or alcohol-containing beverages, **the best way to tell if you are drinking enough water is by the color of your urine.** It should be pale yellow at least once a day.

RECOMMENDED DAILY FLUID INTAKE

Minimal range = 4, eight ounce glasses per day.

Desirable range = 6-8, eight ounce glasses per day.

Optimal range = 8-10, eight ounce glasses per day.

Remember, these ranges do not take into account large sweat losses due to intense exercise. For every pound of weight lost during practice an athlete should drink at least 24 ounces (3, eight ounce cups) of water within 6 hours of the practice. Clear, or pale, urine means an athlete is drinking an adequate amount of fluids. Yellow urine indicates a need to drink more fluids. Expect yellow urine after a practice, but it should be pale or clear the next day.

Source: Dr. Virginia Lee Mermel, PhD, CNS, CLC. She received her PhD in Nutritional Biochemistry with minors in exercise physiology and physiological chemistry from the University of California-Davis in 1983. Her MS degree, also from UC-Davis, is in nutrition. She is a board certified Human Nutrition Specialist (CNS), and also holds a Lifestyle Counselor Certification (CLC) from the LEARN Institute, a teaching division of the Cooper Institute for Aerobic Research (an internationally recognized leader in the field of weight management research).