

Nighttime Snacking

Eating too much at night is a common habit. It's at nighttime that we often let our guard down and the stress of the day manifest themselves in cravings and emotional hunger.

The problem is that these snacks often lead to eating more than what our body needs, making it more difficult to maintain a healthy weight. For some people, nighttime eating can also cause sleep issues as your body fights between needing to digest and needing to rest.

If you struggle with nighttime eating, here are some tips to help you curb your late-night snack habit.

Front load your calories

Skipping breakfast and eating an inadequate lunch often leads to extra hunger and snack at night. Research backs this up, revealing that eating a bigger breakfast and adequate lunch helps reduce cravings later in the day.

Make sure you're getting enough protein at each meal as well as fiber-packed veggies to help fill you up and get you the nutrients your body needs.

Make sure your dinner is satisfying

Dinner should have a minimum of 30 to 40 grams of protein along with 1.5 to 2 cups of vegetables. Grains are great as well! Just make sure to eat your protein and veggies first and then whatever you have room for after that goes to grains.

Distract yourself

Still thinking about food after dinner? Know that it takes about 20 to 30 minutes for a craving to subside. It will get stronger and stronger and then will fade away. If you can make it through these 30 minutes, it's more likely you'll be successful – so choose something to help distract yourself from the thoughts of food.

This could be reading your favorite book, taking a quick walk, going up and down the stairs a few times, or doing some deep breathing exercises. Whatever you do, try not to step foot in the kitchen during a craving!

Figure out what's causing your cravings

What's actually causing this emotional hunger? Is it stress, boredom, or emotions? Or are you not eating enough earlier in the day?

Pinpointing the trigger can help take away the craving's power and allows you to use healthier coping strategies.

Implement little tips & tricks

Sometimes a small reminder or healthy habit can help be enough to deter you from eating after dinner.

Here are some small things to try that can help you be less likely to snack:

- Brush your teeth after dinner. Maybe put your mouth guard in as well, if you wear one at night!
- Tell yourself that the 'Kitchen is Closed' after a certain time and try to avoid that room if possible.
- Put sticky notes or stickers on the cabinet or refrigerator doors as a reminder to stop.
- Print out your Goals sheet and place it somewhere visible in the kitchen to help you remember what you're working towards.

Remember that if you slip up, it's not a big deal! As long as you commit to your health and get back on track as soon as possible, then you'll be following a flexible, forward-moving path that will help you stay resilient.

Rather than perfection, strive for everyday successes. Before bed, jot down 2 to 3 accomplishments from the day – no matter how small – to remind you of the steps you're taking to become your Best Self.

You're doing a great job!
