

A Little and Often – It's the Way to Lose!

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Following an irregular eating plan may result in a slower metabolic rate, making it more difficult for you to burn calories and lose weight.

A regular eating pattern is having a meal or snack every three to four hours throughout the day, and keeping a similar eating pattern everyday. Easier said than done, I hear you say. Yet with so many benefits, you would be crazy not to at least try to develop a regular eating pattern.

Eating regularly encourages a stable blood sugar level, preventing diabetes; a lower blood cholesterol level, preventing heart disease; and greater energy and concentration levels throughout the day with reduced fatigue.

I once had a personal training client who weighed thirty stone. She used to think that if she went for long periods without eating she was consuming fewer calories. It wasn't until she kept a food diary that she realised that the longer period she would leave between meals, the more she would eat. So she was actually consuming all of the days' calories plus more in just one or two meals on days when she skipped meals. She ate less when she began to eat regularly.

With a regular eating pattern you will find it easier to stop eating at the end of a meal, as you will not be absolutely starving when meal times arrive. This ultimately gives you more control over the portion sizes you consume. Ideal if weight loss is your goal.

Some people can't stop thinking about food if they go a long time without eating. The cravings and temptations of "naughty" foods that are high in fat and sugar are also increased. This leads to a loss of control. Ever been to a supermarket hungry? Like most people, you probably ended up buying unnecessary items during this hunger period. Impulse confectionary buys at this time are also common, which is why the chocolate bars always tend to be strategically placed near the checkout!

A recent TV documentary explored research that demonstrated when we skip breakfast, there is an area of the brain that makes us more likely crave foods high in fat and sugar. Our impulses are designed to ensure we survive but they do not consider the consequences of our actions. That is the job of our conscious minds that we are in control of. You too can take control of your eating habits.

Skipping breakfast is the most common mistake that people make when not sticking to a regular eating pattern. First thing in the morning our bodies are low on energy reserves. Eating something, no matter how small helps us to kick-start our metabolisms. Some people believe that they eat more throughout the day when they have breakfast. This maybe the case but the calories are better utilised. Research consistently shows that adults that eat breakfast are less likely to be overweight and also demonstrate improved memory function throughout the day.

If you want to lose weight and eat healthier, developing a regular eating pattern is a great start. Here are some tips to help you out:

Eat Breakfast: Cereals, toast, fruit, a yogurt, even a cooked breakfast if you must – anything to kick-start your metabolism for the day.

Plan Ahead: Plan your meals and snacks in advance and set aside times to eat.

Set some SMART goals: For example: "I will eat breakfast on at least three weekday mornings this week." Or "I will plan what time I will eat my meals or snacks before I go to bed on four days of the week."

Choose Healthy Snacks: These can be eaten between meals - crunchy raw vegetables, fresh and dried fruit, crackers, oatcakes, yoghurts, etc.

Keep a Food Diary: People that keep food diaries statistically lose more weight.

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