

WEIGHT AND ENERGY

Staying Healthy with Dr. Aieta, N.D.

Dr. Aieta,
Could you provide me with some tips on how to maximize weight loss without starving myself? I read that eating small meals throughout the day was the best way to lose weight. Is this true?

Sherri H.

Sherri,

I have certain rules for dieting that I have all my patients follow, regardless of their weight-loss needs. The first is that they eat protein at each meal. This will ensure steady blood sugar and help keep them satiated. Next, they can't skip meals or go too long without eating. Skipping meals puts a huge stress on the body and can cause the body to go into "starvation mode," subsequently slowing the metabolism. Also, eating small meals throughout the day is crucial. You can only metabolize so many calories at each meal, and the rest gets stored as fat. If you split up your calorie intake throughout the day as opposed to eating two or three large meals, you will consistently lose more weight.

Research has shown that overweight individuals tend to consume a higher proportion of their calories later in the day and to eat less for breakfast. So, if you are overweight and are guilty of eating small or no breakfasts, skipping lunch, or eating

sporadically during the day, you should re-think this strategy. In total, the amount of calories consumed is less important than when those calories are consumed.

In one study, researchers fed two groups 2,000 calories each, but changed the timing of intake. The finding was that people consistently gained weight when fed calories late in the day. They also found that if you feed the same individuals the same amount of calories early in the day, then their weight decreased. Simply changing the timing of the calories created a difference between the groups by three pounds per week.

Dr. Aieta,

I have noticed over the past few years that every day, right around the same time, I get a major drop in energy and could almost fall asleep right at my desk. Is there anything that I could do to combat this fatigue short of drinking a large cup of coffee, which has been my usual solution?

Robert M.

Robert,

I hear this a lot. This drop in energy is actually caused by a drop in your blood sugar and is typically caused by something that you ate at lunch. If you eat a lunch



that is very high in carbohydrates, such as pasta or a large grinder on white bread along with a soda or juice, your blood sugar will initially spike, but then plummet. This plummet results in the fatigue you are experiencing.

The best way to combat this is to eat a lunch higher in good protein, such as a chicken breast with vegetables, and to drink water. Also, instead of grabbing a coffee for a pick-me-up, eat something like a handful of nuts or seeds, which contain protein, to help stabilize your blood sugar and your energy level.

Dr. Frank Aieta is a board-certified and licensed Naturopathic Physician with a private practice in West Hartford, Conn. He specializes in the treatment of disease, using natural therapies such as acupuncture, homeopathy, spinal manipulation, clinical nutrition, and herbal medicine. If there is a specific topic you would like to see addressed in an upcoming column, you can e-mail him at DrAieta@aol.com, or visit www.DrAieta.com for additional information.

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