



When Do I Eat and How Much?

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Here are the tools for you to develop your own customized nutrition plan, including what types of foods are best to eat, how much you should eat, and even *when* you should eat.

Although it may seem insignificant, the timing of your meals and snacks can actually make a huge difference in your level of success.

Here's the deal: every time you eat, you increase the number of calories your body burns. No kidding, it's called the thermic effect of food, since your body has to heat up to digest and absorb the food you eat.

You don't have to eat the instant you roll out of bed, but try to have something within the first two hours that you're awake. From that point on, squeeze a snack into any gaps between meals that are greater than four hours.

It may seem counter-intuitive to eat more, particularly when your goal is to lose weight. But we're not asking you to eat *more* – just more often. The idea is that you'll be able to get by with smaller portions at meals, since you've got a snack coming in a few hours.

So as you're snacking your way to a leaner physique, does it really even matter where your calories come from, as long as you're cutting back on your intake?

In a word: Yes.

Sugary, fatty foods can quickly max out your calorie limit, but lower-calorie lean proteins and vegetables – along with fiber-rich whole grains and fresh fruits – can be more than enough to satisfy your hunger.

Plus, you want to be sure that you get enough protein to prevent the loss of valuable muscle mass as you're losing weight.

You may add an egg, egg whites, and/or reduced-fat cheese to your whole grain toast at breakfast, or spread a spoonful of peanut butter onto an apple or whole grain crackers for your afternoon snack. Pressed for time? Grab a protein bar with at least 10 grams of protein and no more than about seven grams of sugar.

At lunch and dinner, have a source of lean protein that's roughly the size of your palm (not your spouse's palm or your kid's palm. Your palm. It's proportionate to your body size). Lean proteins may include skinless poultry, seafood, beans, veggie burgers, lean pork like ham, center-cut chops, or pork loin, or leaner cuts of beef including extra lean ground beef, tenderloin, flank, eye of round, or filet.

As for carbohydrates, it makes sense to have these energy-boosting foods earlier in the day, when your body and your brain can use the lift. But don't overdo it. Most people can get by with one type of carbohydrate per breakfast, lunch, and snack. If you have oatmeal, pass on the toast. Sandwich for lunch? Skip the crackers. And foods like fresh fruit, milk, and most yogurts all contain as much – or more – carbohydrate than a serving of bread, rice, pasta, or potatoes. So if you have fresh fruit, forego the high-carb, fruit-flavored yogurts, and mix your fruit with protein-packed cottage cheese or Greek yogurt.

Try to minimize carbohydrate-rich starches at dinnertime. It's not that starchy foods are inherently 'bad'; whole grains like brown rice, sweet potatoes, and whole wheat pasta, certainly provide health-protective nutrients.

But most of us don't need a load of energy-boosting, calorie-dense carbohydrates right before bedtime, and eliminating that cup or two of starch (even whole grain starch) is an easy way to slash 200 to 400-plus calories from dinner. An added bonus: it'll encourage you to add more vegetables to fill that space on your plate.

When it comes to fats, don't go overboard, since high fat foods can quickly rack up the calories. Instead, reach for items that are low in fat, but not entirely fat free – or use the real thing (mayonnaise, salad dressing, olive oil), just less of it.

Those of you who are numbers-oriented may want to know just how many calories you'll need, along with appropriate amounts of protein, carbohydrate, and fat.

Your calorie requirements depend on a number of factors, including your genetic makeup, size, weight, amount of muscle mass, and level of activity, along with your current calorie intake and your level of hunger.

In spite of the variations, however, there are some simple guidelines you can use. (note: these numbers are conservative estimates to account for the occasional weekend splurge or celebratory indulgence).

To lose weight, you'll need about ten calories per pound of your goal body weight (use 12 calories per pound if you exercise at a moderate intensity up to three or four days a week, and 14 calories per pound if you exercise intensely five to six days a week). For example, if your goal weight is 150 pounds, and you're relatively sedentary, aim for 1500 calories daily. If you exercise moderately three days a week, aim for 1800 calories, and if you workout intensely most days of the week, aim for 2100 calories.

Your target protein and carbohydrate ranges are also relative to your goal body weight.

Aim for at least half a gram to one gram of protein per pound of goal body weight – not to exceed one gram per pound (excess protein isn't necessary for building or maintaining muscle mass, and is associated with a range of negative health effects). This range of 0.5 to 1.0 gram per pound applies for carbohydrates, as well.

So if your goal is 150 pounds, try to get roughly 75 to 150 grams of protein, and 75 to 150 grams of carbohydrate, daily.

The exception: if you're exercising intensely (i.e. training for a marathon or triathlon), you may need more carbohydrates for performance and recovery.

These numbers have your head spinning? Don't worry, you don't have to spend the first half of 2010 with a calculator in tow. There are plenty of (free) websites and smartphone apps that allow you to track your food intake, and give you immediate feedback on nutrients like vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

Not tech-savvy? Not to worry. Just try to keep a general log of what (and when) you eat for a few weeks. It can help you pinpoint your weaknesses, and also identify those times when you might not be eating enough. It may also be beneficial to ask a friend to take an objective look with you.

Whether your food journal is a high-tech online log or simple notepad, the important thing is to be honest and diligent. Keep track of every morsel that passes your lips. You may be surprised that you eat more after dinner than throughout the rest of your entire day. Or you may notice that your weekdays are fabulously well-controlled, but the less-structured weekend days are wreaking havoc on your diet.

To Determine Calorie Intake:

- Calories: Goal body weight x 10 = ___ calories daily
- Protein: 0.5 to 1 gram per pound of goal body weight = ___ grams protein daily
- Carbohydrate: 0.5 to 1 gram per pound of goal body weight = ___ grams carbohydrate daily

Here's *approximately* what 1500 calories in one day would look like!

	Sample Day	Grab & Go Options	Absolutely No Effort
Breakfast	Omelet: one egg + three egg whites, add spinach, tomatoes, and onions (or any veggies you prefer) 1 slice of 100% whole grain bread with teaspoon of butter 1 cup skim or 1% milk (plain, or mixed with hot cereal or coffee)	Kashi Hot Cereal oatmeal-style packet 1 cup skim or 1% milk (plain, or mixed with hot cereal or coffee) Berries (optional)	Special K Protein Plus Cereal (1½ cups) with 1 cup of skim or 1% milk Berries (optional)
Snack (when more than four hours)	Cottage cheese, ½ cup	String cheese	Beef jerky, one ounce
Lunch	Four ounces of lean meat Potato or sweet potato, size of computer mouse Grilled vegetables and/or salad, minimal oils	Turkey sandwich on 100% whole grain bread (three ounces turkey, one slice cheese, light mayonnaise) Side of vegetables (grilled, raw, or steam-in-the-bag)	McDonald's Grilled Chicken Salad (any variety) with Newman's Own Light salad dressing
Snack	Greek yogurt (plain; 2%) + fresh fruit	Small apple + tablespoon of peanut butter	Protein bar with ~200 calories and at least 10 grams protein
Dinner	Lean meat, four ounces	Lean meat (i.e. pre-	Frozen dinner:

	<p>Unlimited non-starchy vegetables (grilled, steamed, raw, etc), minimal oils</p> <p>Salad, with light dressing (or 1/2 tbsp olive oil or full-fat dressing)</p>	<p>seasoned and grilled boneless skinless chicken breast or pre-marinated pork loin), four ounces</p> <p>Steam-in-the-bag vegetables</p> <p>Pre-bagged mixed greens topped with light vinaigrette</p>	<p><350 calories</p> <p>20+ protein</p> <p><30 grams carbohydrate</p>
Snack (optional)	<p>Anything with less than 150 calories (i.e. Fun Size candy bar, two Oreo cookies, berries with whipped topping, six ounces wine)</p>	<p>Anything with less than 150 calories (i.e. mini or kid-size frozen yogurt, 100-calorie pack, berries with whipped topping, six ounces wine)</p>	<p>Anything with less than 150 calories (i.e. low-fat popcorn, 50-cal La Tortilla Factory or 50-cal bread with 1 tbsp peanut butter, berries with whipped topping, six ounces wine)</p>