

Myths about Dieting

- **MYTH # 1 -- Eating Late at Night Is Sure to Pack on the Pounds**

Your body doesn't process calories differently after dark. However, the foods that people tend to go for in front of the TV after dinner--chips, ice cream, chocolate treats, and the like--are usually high in fat and calories. The *kinds of foods you're eating* are the concern, not the clock.

- **MYTH # 2 -- Never Have Seconds**

Instead of using a plate of food or a predetermined serving size as a yardstick for how much you should eat, try taking hunger and fullness clues from your body. Eating according to your appetite is much healthier. And when you eat slowly, recognizing when you've had enough is much easier.

Keep in mind that there's a difference between appetite and hunger. *Appetite* has more to do with flavor preferences and craving; *hunger* is a biological manifestation of the body's real need for food. If it's been a while since you and your appetite have seen eye to eye on how much to eat, try this: Serve yourself only half of what you think you want to eat. If you're still hungry after eating at a leisurely pace, go for it--in moderation, of course. Also recognize that you're hungrier on some days than on others. So when you're really, truly hungry, it's fine to eat more. Remember that one meal does not define healthy eating. What you eat over the course of a day, or actually over several days, does.

- **MYTH # 3 -- Deny Your Cravings; They're All in Your Head**

Sometimes, the faster you give in and have a small portion of the food you're craving, the better off you are. You can pack on lots of calories by trying to eat around the one thing you truly want. Have a small serving of the food you crave and get over it.

- **MYTH # 4 -- Don't Eat Between Meals**

Most people need to eat every 3 to 4 hours to avoid a feast-or-famine mentality and risk overeating because you're over-hungry. Dividing your calories into three meals and two or three snacks, instead of only three meals, can keep you well fueled for the day. Try planning two or three snack-sized portions (for example, a piece of fruit or a couple of Fig Newtons plus low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt) into your day's food choices. Doing so may help lessen your hunger pangs so that you're less likely to overeat at the next meal.

- **MYTH # 5 -- Eating Breakfast Makes You Hungry All Day**

Many typical breakfast foods--Danish, toast with jelly, and bagels, for example--are mainly carbohydrates in their simplest form. These foods, while initially satisfying, are out of your system in about 30 minutes, and you need (and want) to eat again. Breakfast foods that have some protein and a little fat, in addition to complex carbohydrates and sugars, stay with you longer and give you the energy you need to make it through the morning. Whole-grain cereal with low-fat or fat-free milk, an egg on toast, and even a fruity breakfast shake made with low-fat or fat-free milk are good choices.