

[IMAGE]

Time for Dinner?

By Editorial Staff

You may want to change your dinner habits, because new research from researchers at Harvard Medical School suggests there's a general time you should eat dinner by if you want to avoid weight gain. Let's examine the study to see not only when you should eat dinner, but also why it's so important.

The ideal time to eat your last meal of the day is as close to 5 p.m. as possible. According to the study, eating dinner at this time reduces hunger (thus reducing the danger of overeating) compared to eating dinner as late as 9 p.m. But that's not the only reason to eat dinner early; the research also suggests eating by 5 p.m. allows the body to store less fat compared to eating later in the evening.

In arriving at their findings, researchers allocated overweight patients into several groups for comparison. While all patients consumed the exact same diet, some ate within an earlier window (with their last meal of the day by 5 p.m.), while others ate within a later window (last meal of the day by 9 p.m.). Therefore, results not only demonstrate the importance of avoiding later-night eating, but also underscore the value of an early overall eating window throughout the day. (Participants in the 5 p.m. dinner group ate their first meal at approximately 9 a.m., whereas participants in the 9 p.m. dinner group started eating at around 1 p.m.)

Of course, there's a certain reality: We can't all eat dinner as early as 5 p.m., (or eat our first meal of the day by 9 a.m.), depending on our work schedules and other commitments. That's OK, because the real takeaway is more general: consume more of your daily calories earlier, which presumably will avoid the tendency to eat more calories later at night (when science says they are more likely to be stored as fat, and that people are more likely to eat poor-quality foods – i.e., late-night snacking). Your body will thank you for it.

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