



Five Reasons You're Always Starving

...and a foolproof plan to keep hunger from gnawing away at your weight-loss goals.

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1 You eat the right foods at the wrong times

Eating at different times every day can make it difficult for you to tune in to your body's hunger signals, says Cindy Moore, M.S., R.D., director of Nutrition Therapy at the Cleveland Clinic. Haphazard eating can hurt your metabolism as well. When British researchers asked women to eat meals at either the same time

or at different times each day, those who followed a predictable pattern ate less and burned more calories than those who ate at a different time every day.

THE FIX Plan ahead

If you've been journaling, review your food diary to zero in on when you're most likely to fall prey to eating at erratic times. (If you haven't been keeping a food diary, try doing so for a few days.) Then, says Moore, write out a schedule that focuses on eating within 2 hours of waking up and every 3 to 5 hours after that for the rest of the day. If you tend

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EAT ON TIME

Scientists say that failing to eat regularly scheduled meals can boost the body's output of insulin, which can, in turn, increase appetite and slow calorie burn.

You're driving along on your way to work, to the gym, or to pick up the kids and—bam—it hits you—that overwhelming gnawing hunger. The next thing you know, you're pulling into a drive-through and ordering up a storm. Isn't it fascinating (and frustrating) how the "I have to eat now!" feeling can hit even if you've been making good nutrition a top priority? Experts are discovering that when you eat, what your food tastes like, and even how much you drink can have a major impact on how often hunger pangs strike.

We asked leading nutritionists to share with us the five most common reasons you're frequently famished, as well as their top tips for maximizing satisfaction and keeping hunger at bay.

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to lose track of time, set your watch or digital organizer to beep when you should eat.

2 You eat breakfast, just not the right kind

Although any breakfast is better than none, the foods you choose can have a major impact on how satisfied you feel for the rest of the day. Take that convenient cereal bar: It might appear to be a healthy choice when you don't have time for a sit-down meal, but its mega-dose of simple sugars may send your blood sugar on a roller-coaster ride and have you rummaging through the fridge well before lunch.

THE FIX Build a better mix of nutrients

The key to making your breakfast hold your appetite at bay until lunch is building a morning meal that contains both protein and carbs. "It's important to combine some protein along with some complex carbohydrates to keep blood-sugar levels steady and provide sustained energy throughout the morning," says Bonnie Taub-Dix, M.A., R.D., a Long Island-based dietitian in private practice. Opt for no-fuss choices like a slice of cheese on whole-wheat bread, egg whites on toast, whole-grain cereal with low-fat milk, even half a turkey sandwich.

3 Your diet is flawless but flavorless

If ho-hum, diet-conscious standbys like grilled chicken and steamed veggies are staples on your dinner plate, you could be headed for trouble. "You're going to get bored and eventually have difficulty sticking with your weight-loss plan," says Lona Sandon, M.Ed., R.D., assistant professor of clinical nutrition at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

THE FIX Spice it up

Getting creative in the kitchen will give your standby recipes new life—and keep you more satisfied in the long run. "Experiment with fresh, flavorful herbs, like basil, gingerroot, oregano, and mint," suggests Cindy Moore. Also, adding acidity (a dash of lemon juice or balsamic vinegar) and

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sweetness (a teaspoon of honey or brown sugar) can make your staple dishes more complex in taste—and more satisfying. Texture is also key: Aim for combinations of creamy, crunchy, and chewy. Try tossing chopped nuts on your greens or mixing granola into your yogurt.

4 You stockpile your calories

Do you often eat so sparingly during the day that by the time dinner rolls around you're famished? That strategy can backfire, leading to uncontrollable overeating in the evening. "When you skip meals, your blood sugar falls and it's harder to think straight, so you're less concerned with the implications of what you eat," says Taub-Dix.

THE FIX Frontload those calories

Eating earlier in the day is a must to head off disaster later on. Limit the size of your evening meal so that you wake

up eager for breakfast. Even if you're not hungry, be sure to eat something—even a small bite. "Treat yourself the way you'd treat your kids—you wouldn't let them skip meals," says Taub-Dix.

5 You drink your meals

With the ever-increasing popularity of lattes for breakfast and smoothies for lunch, many of us are drinking our calories away. But drinking too many caloric beverages

can ultimately leave you feeling unsatisfied. When researchers at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, gave study participants 450 extra calories daily in the form of either

fluid or solid food, those who ate the extra solids ate less later in the day whereas those who drank the extra fluids did not. The reasoning: Chewing causes the release of hormones that signal fullness, and solid food is digested more slowly than liquids.

THE FIX Rethink convenience

Slurping down a meal might seem fast and easy, but in the time it takes to drive to the coffee shop, stand on line, and pay for that latte, you could have had something just as quick—and far more satisfying.

"Try a slice of toast with peanut butter or a cup of yogurt with some fruit," says Lona Sandon. If it's the comfort of a hot drink you crave, go ahead and have that latte—just order it with fat-free milk. And instead of sipping it solo, enjoy it with a few whole-grain crackers or a banana. In other words, focus on food combinations that will get you through to your next meal—no starving required. ■

PLAN AHEAD

Don't wait until you're starving to think about food: Tuck portable snacks like granola bars or string cheese in your purse so you'll be ready when hunger strikes.



⤴ Time to eat: When you're just starting to get hungry but you're not yet famished, dig in.