

Get the Facts: Meals Per Day

Myth:

In order to lose weight, I have to have _ meals per day and eat _ number of carbs right off the bat.

Fact:

This myth plays off of many of the topics talked about in previous issues of Wellness Weekly. I will break this down into two sections: one regarding beginners attempting to lose weight to be healthier or look better and another on athletes attempting to cut down past a plateau point. Let's focus on the more common first topic.

I may sound like a broken record but when it comes down to it, calories in and calories out is the name of the game for weight loss. If you are looking to shed some pounds for bikini season or just to lower your risk for disease, work on how much you eat not when you eat. This is a very difficult first step and unfortunately is often missed. But the person is not always to blame in this regard, many personal trainers, coaches, and others giving nutritional advice simply tell people to adhere to this blindly without realizing the struggles behind it. I have heard (and admittedly, have said) "just start tracking what you eat" without realizing how difficult or how much of a burden this can be to the client. In the words of Chelsea Knox from Alan Aragon's research review, "We naturally believe that we are ultra-motivated and determined to reach our goals, and nothing can get in our way." We all know that there are moments where we just cannot adhere to our program and fall off the wagon to which many cannot get back on. This can happen within the first week or after a year. This brings up the question: if we shouldn't worry about meal timing, or macronutrients, and

most people will fail due to poor adherence, how is anyone supposed to succeed? Well there is a great article on what is called planned hedonic deviations or what many people call "cheat meals." This study looked at dieting solely with calorie restriction (no meal timing or macronutrient manipulation) and people were shown to be able to not only maintain their meal plan longer but also at a lower calorie amount and continued to lose weight afterward when added cheat meals were allowed. A caveat to this is the cheating must be planned into the overall nutrition plan or else a "what the hell" effect can occur, once again causing you to fall off the wagon. Overall, there is hope and we all know how hard it is to get going but tips to stick with the core concept of calorie restriction is the key to success.



Now for the second population, athletes attempting to cut fat. The reason I separate these is because once the lifestyle and behavior aspects are perfected, and the caloric consumption is corrected, there are other factors to lose fat and maintain muscle mass, the key being “maintain muscle mass.” See the image attached as to the steps needed to perfect before manipulating the subsequent factors within a diet. Food timing does come into play at this point but please be sure the calories are correct, I can’t tell you how often I hit a wall just because I wasn’t tracking properly. Food timing and macros in this scenario are pretty significant. There has been extensive research to find the perfect combination but unfortunately we are all different and there is no one size fits all approach. From what has been studied I can tell you this:

- ◆ Protein must stay high and spaced out as well as positioned around the workouts (amount of protein varies per person)
- ◆ A recent article has shown high protein and carb consumption early in the day can decrease ghrelin (a hunger hormone) and increase satiety throughout the day.
- ◆ Make sure to consume enough protein per session to stimulate muscle growth.
- ◆ Carbs are still important but they are also what you can manipulate the most.

I will post another article in the near future for athletes and lifters on muscle catabolism and anabolism for further insight.

Conclusion:

Losing weight is hard. Keeping it off is harder. Going cold turkey doesn’t work and many blame it on the fact that they didn’t time their meals right or they ate too many carbs or what they ate wasn’t organic enough. The bitter truth is that you failed and that’s OKAY. In order to succeed, you need a plan that works for YOU not a prewritten plan sold by a company who also makes the food they tell you to buy. Understand your weaknesses and strengths and play off them. If all else fails, look at the pyramid and start from the bottom. Create a plan, modify it, modify it again, and stick to it.

References:

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