

The Munchies



Someone asked me the other day how I feel about late night snacking.

When I think about late night snacking that raises the question, "When is the best time to eat?"

Everyone wants to know if they should eat early. My first experience with that was back in the early 80's when I used to jump around in front of my TV following the Jane Fonda exercise tapes. What a waste of time that was. I did that routine just about every day but it never helped me lose weight. Maybe it toned me a bit but I never peeled off the pounds. And Jane Fonda is the one that said never to eat after 6PM, or maybe it was 7PM. I forget. I never followed that advice anyway. By the time I got home from work, got done jumping around in front of the TV and got some time to make something for dinner it was way past 7PM anyway.

Her contention (and that of other so-called experts at the time) was that if you ate later you'd get fatter.

Other experts will tell you that eating breakfast is the most important because then you have more hours to burn off those calories. I always hated eating breakfast. Even as a kid, I'd

rather run out the door and catch the bus to go to school without eating. My mother had to nail me to the chair and force Rice Krispies in me before I left. I wasn't hungry in the morning so I never got any satisfaction out of that. As soon as I was old enough to make my own decisions I went back to not eating breakfast.

About a decade ago I started to force myself to eat something in the morning. I wanted to be thin so if they were right about eating in the morning, maybe I better buy into it. I had no trouble with it during the weekend. It was during the week when I hated eating in the morning. I just wanted to get to work. I'd eat a banana and a glass of skim milk. So there. That was breakfast. Didn't seem to help and now I know that the banana was too high carb and the skim milk wasn't doing me any favors either. And the Rice Krispies were a huge mistake.

It really doesn't matter when you eat. Today's science clearly shows that. Your body will burn calories even while you are sleeping. What matters is WHAT you eat, how large you are, how much activity you produce, your natural metabolic rate, and how much muscle mass you have.

The more muscle mass you have the more calories you will burn. But if you are larger you'll burn more calories than a skinny person too. It just takes more energy for the larger person to even move around. If your activity level is low or your metabolism is slow you'll burn fewer calories. If you eat more carbohydrates than your body needs your body will turn the excess into fat. So what you eat is important. Protein and vegetables are your best bets for what to eat.

It's true that larger people who suffer from things like acid reflux are better off eating earlier so their digestion has a

chance to empty the stomach before the person tries to lie down. And older people often find that if they eat earlier they sleep better.

Calories will burn while you are asleep. No doubt about that. And the more sleep the better. If you sleep less than six hours a night your body will be running at an energy deficit and that has been proven to affect how your body burns calories. So get a good night's rest.

So to get back to the question about snacking at night. It really doesn't matter when you eat. It's what you eat and how much you eat during the entire day that matters. Instead of eating late at night you're probably better off going to bed and getting a good night of rest; that is unless you are in a position to sleep later. In that case if you get the right amount of sleep it doesn't matter if you eat late at night. So how's that for giving you the run around? Does any of this make any sense?

Here's the bottom line: Eat the right stuff and in the right quantity and quit worrying about what time you eat it.

When you're eating the right foods, your body know what to do with them, regardless of the time.

Cheers,