

## Tips for Late Night Snacking

They say eating at night can lead to weight gain, but what if you're hungry? The good news is that there are many ways to avoid excessive hunger at night without overdoing it on calories. Here are some tips to keep evening snacks healthy so you can go to bed without being hungry.

First ask, why are you hungry at night? It's possible that you did not have enough to eat during the day. Or, you may not have had enough filling nutrients, such as fiber and protein. It's even possible that what you feel in the evening is thirst, and not hunger.

These tips may help reduce the need to snack at night.

- Follow a consistent meal schedule so your body knows when to expect food.
- Eat a dinner with low-calorie, high-volume foods, especially vegetables. These can fill you up without getting in the way of weight loss.
- Include filling, low-calorie foods throughout the day. Lean proteins and high-fiber foods are usually good choices compared to sugary, fatty, or processed foods.

It is also a good idea to think about whether your evening snack cravings are due to hunger, or to something else, such as boredom or loneliness. If you think you are eating for emotional reasons, it's best to stay busy with something or to directly address the emotion or problem in ways other than food. Going for a walk, calling a loved one, and practicing ways that can be healthier ways to handle emotions than turning to food.

Sometimes, you really are hungry at night. What can you snack on that won't keep you up all night and could lead to weight gain?

Generally, evening snacks should be:

- Portion and calorie-controlled
- Low in sugar, refined starches, and saturated fats
- Moderate in high-fiber carbohydrates

It's also good to leave as much time as possible before bedtime to avoid going to bed on an overly full stomach. That could interfere with sleep or lead to indigestion or heartburn.

Snacks might include foods such as whole grains, some fruit, a serving of a reduced-fat dairy product, or a vegetable. A small amount of healthy fat or protein can also be part of a healthy evening snack cottage cheese and banana, string cheese and whole grain crackers.

If you are going to have evening snacks regularly, you can plan for them, so they don't derail your healthy eating plans. Here are some ways to make evening snacks part of your daily plan.

- If you don't like starting the day with breakfast but you like an evening snack, you might try having "breakfast" in the evening. That could be whole-grain toast with peanut butter, whole-grain cereal with milk, or oatmeal with fruit.
- If you know an evening snack is coming, consider having a bit less at your lunch or afternoon snack to make up for it.

Source: Lark.com