



How Often Should I Eat?

Exploring Meal Frequency

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I grew up around the bodybuilding industry, so earlier on most of my information came from “the big guy” at the gym or the muscle mags. When it came to how often I should eat to be lean and mean they all said the same thing! As often as possible and more specifically 6-7 times per day. Dang! As a college kid eating every 2-3 hours was tough! Sneaking a shake during class, hiding in the bathroom stall at work to wolf down a protein shake. Was this necessary?

The gym AKA “bro Science” myths of meal frequency



The following are the top myths typically posed as to why eating every 2-3 hours is the way to go:

1. **MYTH 1 Keep the metabolism “stoked”** As a young meathead the most common argument that I used to for eating as often as possible is that it increased your metabolism. After all there IS a thermogenic affect of food, meaning it costs the body energy to digest foods. The energy cost is fairly significant at around 7% of total calories consumed being used just to digest the food itself. This means that every 1000 calories eaten around 70 are used in the digestion of those calories. Thus the logic went, if I eat more often then my body’s metabolism will increase because it is constantly working to digest those calories. The

REALITY is that studies have clearly shown that the thermogenic effect of food relates to the size of the meal much more than the frequency. This means that the larger a meal is the higher the thermogenic effect is. This accounts to why we want to zonk out after huge meals such as Christmas or Thanksgiving feasts. The bottom line is that the thermogenic effect of food is NOT positively affected by meal spacing.

2. **MYTH 2 Protein bruh!** Everyone knows that if you do not consume protein every 2-3 hours then your biceps shrivel up and atrophy to the size of little raisins and you immediately lose 50 lbs off your deadlift. You gotta feed the muscles every 2-3 hours to prevent that, bro! The REALITY is that protein takes several hours to digest. Even 30 g of pure whey (which is a faster digesting protein) can take over 3 hours to fully digest and be assimilated for use. If you look at a typical meal of say an 8 oz chicken breast the digestion rate can easily increase to 6 or more hours. A few other factors that can slow down the digestion process are how much fat and dietary fiber are in the meal. Thus a ribeye steak eaten at 5 pm may not be readily broken down for useable amino acids until the next day. The body is constantly breaking down protein from ingested sources throughout the day as we eat. A lot of the hype around eating protein every 2-3 hours came directly from the manufactured protein industry. If the public thinks they need to eat protein every 2-3 hours then that’s a lot more people purchasing protein!



3. **MYTH 3 Since you are eating so often you will not get hungry.** This CAN be true or it CAN be the complete opposite. If you are eating snacks that are higher in simple sugars, low in fat, protein, or both then your body's rapid rise in insulin will actually make you hungrier. If your snacks are balanced, micronutrient rich, and higher in fiber then yes they can absolutely help you control hunger.

4. **MYTH 4 I will not have energy if I do not eat every 2-3 hours** This argument is similar to the protein myth and is dispelled the same way. Food eaten at 9 am may not be broken down and readily available as an energy source for several hours later depending on the size and composition of the meal. For very high level performance athletes or those who are training several hours per day and executing 2 a day training then post workout meal timing can be relevant in replenishing their glycogen stores quickly before their next bout of training. For people training once per day for less than 3 hours research has shown that glycogen stores are properly replenished before the next training bout with adequate carbohydrate consumption so for most of us this is not a concern.

The opposite side?

Intermittent Fasting or Fasting is a technique that has grown in popularity the last several years that both athletes and general populations have used to increase fat loss, have more energy, and control hunger.

In this approach people generally eat once or twice per



day within a given "feeding window" allowing for rather large meals to be consumed as all of the

needed calories must be consumed within this window. For more information on intermittent fasting or IM check out our complete article on it at <https://www.resultz1.com/rz1-nutrition>

What is best then?

If eating for overall health, longevity, and fat loss the most important aspect is to consume the appropriate amount of calories and macronutrients within a 24 hour period. For most people who are working out regularly this may be a breakfast, lunch, dinner, and a shake or a snack after your workout. If you are a busy professional and work 12 hour days then you may skip breakfast and opt for a lunch, dinner and late night snack. (no, eating late at night will NOT turn to fat nor is it bad for you). The bottom line is that you are going to want to eat in a manner that fits your lifestyle

Are there exceptions?

Individuals with low blood sugar may be required to eat every 3 hours to avoid dizzy spells or light headedness. Some professions such as attorneys, accountants, or professions that require large amounts of reading may require larger amounts of carbohydrates earlier or throughout the day to provide glucose to the brain. According to literature published by Dr. Layne Norton on l-leucine and protein synthesis, competitive bodybuilders, strength athletes, and those looking to optimize gains in muscularity, spacing your protein out into 3-4 feedings may be optimal. It is noteworthy to say that many of these types of athletes also adopt an IM approach and excel in their sport so if you are looking to optimize muscularity and spacing your protein out over 3-4 feeding is not feasible then I would not stress over it.

Looking for help on your nutrition or have a suggested topic for us? Email nutrition@resultz1.com

