



MEAL TIMING AND FREQUENCY

The American Heart Association encourages an intentional approach to eating. Intentional eating, or eating with purpose, is a way to balance your body's needs while helping you move toward health goals. By bringing more attention to your body's hunger signals and responses, you can recognize situations and foods that make you feel energized and full longer.

Tips for Intentional Eating:

- **Pay attention to your mood and hunger level** when reaching for a snack, a sugary item or overeat. Are you eating because you're bored, stressed, upset or excited?
- **Eat frequently throughout the day.** Lower your risk of binge eating or overeating at meals by balancing your meals throughout the day. This also helps maintain energy and focus. Eat main meals every 4-5 hours and add a healthy (high-fiber) snack in between meals as needed.
 - Example: 8 a.m. breakfast, 10 a.m. small snack, 12 p.m. lunch, 3 p.m. small snack, 5 p.m. dinner, 7 p.m. small snack.
- **Avoid late night eating.** Eating large portions later in the day has been associated with weight gain and poor heart health.
- **Plan meals** around vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean proteins and low-fat dairy.
- **Eat within 2 hours of waking up.** Eating breakfast has been found to increase metabolism and lower your risk of overeating. Make breakfast the night before, such as overnight oats, so it is ready to go in the morning!
- **Choose a variety of nutrient-dense meals and snacks.** High fiber snacks will keep you fuller longer, such as a piece of fruit with nut butter, carrot sticks and hummus, or plain popcorn (which is a whole grain).

