

Eating A Late Dinner – Is It A Healthy Choice ?

Daily meals play a very vital role in everybody's life.

A balanced meal is something that is supposed to prepare the body for daily work, nutrition requirement and to ensure all functions of the body such as breathing, movement, thinking or any other type of bodily function such as, maintaining the body's temperature or even preventing sickness. Not just this, but it is also the source of materials required for the growth and repair of the body, and for keeping the immune system healthy.

But taking good food alone does not ensure that all of the above requirements are met. It is very important to take proper quantity of food at proper time. As much tempting is the late night snacking, here's why it should be avoided at all costs.

We all know that food is main source of energy for a living being. Now, we must understand that the energy produced by food intake and the energy spent by the body on a daily basis should be same. If in case the energy intake is higher than energy spent, then that extra energy gets converted into fat, which will then result in weight gain.

This is the exact process that happens when we consume heavy foods at late hours in the night and limit ourselves to sleep, thereby eliminating major ways of spending energy. Although, even while we are asleep, our body uses energy to perform basic functions but that energy expense is very little. This leaves behind a lot of unused energy which gets converted and stored as fats.

Another harmful effect of late night snacking is acid reflux or what is commonly known as hyperacidity. Our stomach secretes certain fluids known as enzymes, which help in digestion. This process usually takes a few hours' time for any meal. After a heavy meal, if we immediately go to sleep it allows for the stomach acids (secreted to digest food) to spill out of a flat lying full stomach and leak into oesophagus, leading to acid reflux (hyperacidity).

As per a research, eating a heavy meal too close to bedtime results in increased blood sugar and insulin as well, which leads to having a hard time falling asleep. Eating late night meal is detrimental to your metabolic health. And that means it increase risk to insulin resistance, pre diabetes, diabetes type 2 and heart disease.

Interestingly, human bodies have an internal biological clock (Circadian rhythm) which can be considered the same as a 24 hour cycle that affects everything, from our energy levels and metabolism to the way our organs function. Food which is taken late at night (especially heavy foods) breaks the Circadian rhythm. Human body is habitual to stay awake, work and eat during the day, and sleep during night, when it is dark. And that's why during day time, the secretion of the digesting enzymes is higher than at night, making digestion better during day than at night.

So trust your hunger and plan your meal. Regular meal time should be such that we eat every 3 to 4 hours in order to allow our stomach to digest food properly. Following the meal times sincerely will help the body know exactly when it is time to eat, which will further help to prevent overeating and improve overall digestive health.

It is advised to always keep a gap of 3 hours between dinner and bedtime to give the stomach ample time to digest food. If it's too late (exceptionally) prefer 'mini meal' instead of snacks and choose nutrient-dense foods such as fruit, vegetables, or whole grains instead of processed

foods that are high in fat, sugar, salt and calories such as instant noodles, energy bars or fried food.

Don't forget - "Eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a queen, and dinner like a pauper" - Adelle Davis

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