

Why skipping meals is one of the cardinal sins of fat burning nutrition...and how to eat more food and lose more fat at the same time

By Diego Schmunis - CPT

Skipping meals (or leaving long gaps between meals) is the cardinal sin of fat burning and muscle-building nutrition. Missing meals slows down your metabolism, causes muscle loss and triggers your body's starvation responses.

Suppose you skip breakfast and you haven't eaten since 8:00 p.m. the previous evening. If you eat lunch at 12:00 pm, you've gone 16 hours without any food. At this point, you are not only in a highly catabolic (muscle wasting) state, you're also sending an unmistakable starvation signal to your body.

If skipping meals is the cardinal sin of fat burning and muscle building nutrition, then **skipping breakfast is a capital crime suited for the death penalty!** And yet "everybody" is doing it! When I analyze nutrition programs for my clients, one of the most common errors I see is skipping breakfast or eating it late, around 10:00 a.m. or even later. "I don't have time" is usually the excuse justifying this unforgivable blunder. Let's take a close look at the devastating impact this lack of planning and discipline has on your fat loss efforts: Suppose you're in a hurry to get to work in the morning and you bolt out the door without eating breakfast. Your first meal of the day is lunch at 12:00 noon. It's moderately sized, let's say 500 calories, consisting of a turkey sandwich on wheat and a banana. Sounds fairly healthy so far. By your customary dinnertime of 6:00 p.m., you are ravenously hungry, and you polish off a massive plate of pasta for a total of 800 calories. Later that night you're still hungry and craving something sweet. Some cookies and low fat milk do the trick – about 300 calories. Then you go right to sleep. Although far from perfect, this menu doesn't sound like a total disaster to the average, uniformed person... But IT IS! It's a nightmare!

If we add up those calories, it totals only 1600 for the entire day. In theory, at least according to the calorie calculations you did previously, you should be losing fat – quite rapidly if you're a man. So why aren't you? It's because you're doing EVERYTHING possible to encourage your body to *store* fat: You are going catabolic by leaving 18 hours between dinner and the next day's lunch. This causes muscle loss and metabolic downgrade. Because you've only eaten one meal during the day, you're famished and you eat too much at dinner. Even though you're in a 24-hour calorie deficit, this causes fat storage anyway because you've eaten more than you can handle at one sitting. By "starving and stuffing," you've also set yourself up for serious cravings at night; usually the wrong foods – like cookies or ice cream! In the long run, this type of diet is a sure-fire way to slow down your metabolism, lose muscle and gain body fat. On the other hand, 2400 calories spread out into five or six small meals of 400 - 480 calories each (about 300-350 calories per meal for women), will increase energy, accelerate muscle growth, and speed up your metabolism without fat storage. Frequent eating can actually allow you to consume up to 50% more calories without storing an ounce of it as fat!

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