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# Meal Timing for Success

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## Why is Meal Timing Important?

- Assists with weight loss, blood glucose management, and improving the health of your liver.
- Skipping meals can lead to gaining body fat around your stomach. This has a domino effect raising liver enzymes, contributing to reflux and lower back pain, and driving up blood glucose levels.

## Observe your Current Habits

- Ask yourself, are you eating just one meal per day? Is it because you are not hungry?
- When you skip meals, your liver takes an active role converting fat and releasing glucose and “bad” or LDL cholesterol into your blood stream keeping you from getting hunger cues.
- Your liver may try to replace fat by storing other types of calories (such as protein) as fat right around the liver. This can make you gain weight very quickly in your stomach area.
- Keeping a food diary can help you learn about current habits.

## Plan

- The number of times you eat will depend on how long you are awake. For example, if you get eight hours of sleep, that gives you sixteen hours awake. Your first meal or snack should be within two hours of waking if possible.
- You may choose to have three meals and no snack. If you sleep less, you have more hours to cover. A healthy snack containing fiber can help. Your snack-time goals should be roughly half of all your meal-time goals.
- Choose a high fiber food every 4-6 hours while awake. The goal for a high fiber meal is to eat 7-11g of Dietary Fiber each meal.
- Read the food label! Look for how many grams of fiber are in each serving, then multiply by the number of servings you are planning to eat.
- Combine fiber with proper hydration to help correct constipation or diarrhea.

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## How Does It Work?

- If you are prescribed a GLP-1 analog, this hormone regulates how food, especially carbohydrates, leaves your stomach. Think of it as a helpful filter for your stomach.
- Some foods, such as saturated fats like butter, bacon, coconut oil, and animal fats require a lot of acid to digest and can worsen reflux or nausea.
- Eating a high fiber meal every 4-6 hours helps it to work more effectively often with fewer G.I. side effects.
- Fiber supplements may be tempting, but your stomach operates smoother with fiber from food. Don't forget to drink water!

## Making It Fit!

- Forming the habit of eating every 4-6 hours can be difficult at first. Use reminders such as setting an alarm on your phone to remember until the habit is formed.
- To help digestion, consider taking a 10-minute walk after each of your 3 meals.

## My Plan:

I usually wake up at: \_\_\_\_\_

I usually go to sleep at: \_\_\_\_\_

In order to eat every 4-6 hours of my waking day my plan is:

Meal/snack 1: \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm

Meal/snack 2: \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm

Meal/snack 3: \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm

Meal/snack 4: \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm \*if needed.

For a list of high fiber foods and fiber content of foods, visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov).