

# Nutrition SENSE

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS – DINING SERVICES

APRIL 2010



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APRIL *quick tip*

Late night eating  
should not be more  
than 200 calories

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**Nutrition**  
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You may hear that you can gain weight if you eat late at night. Late night eating can result in weight gain, but first you need to determine why you are eating late at night:

## Why Do YOU Eat Late at Night?

**BORED?** Eating late can lead to excess calorie intake due to mindless eating. You can just eat and watch television or munch on food while studying without paying attention to how much you are eating.

**HUNGRY?** Refer to next page for the differences between hunger and craving.

**STRESSED OUT?** Do you eat while you are stressed, perhaps just before a big exam, or while working on a major project? Determine if you are really hungry or perhaps thirsty. Find another outlet of releasing stress rather than eating. Exercise helps with releasing stress, so be sure to exercise daily.

# Hunger vs. Cravings

When a person is motivated to eat, is he or she experiencing hunger or a craving? How does one differentiate between them? **Hunger** is a physiological drive prompting a person to seek food for consumption. Symptoms of hunger include:

- an empty feeling in the stomach
- growling of the stomach
- fatigue
- irritability
- nausea
- shakiness
- difficulty concentrating

**Food cravings** are a motivational state in which a person feels a psychological drive to consume a specific food. Cravings may or may not occur when an individual feels hungry. One is more likely to crave a particular food if the food is forbidden from his/her diet. Instead of eliminating a favorite food from the diet, one should include it in moderation; inclusion will prevent the likelihood of a craving and the risk of a binge. Also, when choosing to ingest a prized provision, take the time to enjoy the experience! One should not feel guilty for partaking of a sumptuous snack.

Negative emotions often lead to cravings. Consuming a craved food in response to an emotional trigger is called "emotional eating." **Emotional eating** occurs when one eats to numb, distract, comfort or pleasure oneself. To manage emotional cravings, one can employ the following strategies\*:

- Learn to recognize true hunger
- Know your triggers
- Look elsewhere for comfort
- Minimize unhealthy food choices
- Choose healthful snacks
- Eat a balanced diet
- Exercise regularly
- Get enough sleep

## Hunger vs. Craving Quiz

Take this quiz\*\* to assess if you are privy to the differences between cravings and hunger. Circle the letter that most appropriately describes the statements.

**C: CRAVINGS H: HUNGER E: EITHER N: NEITHER**

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| C H E N | 1. Even after a large meal, I still want dessert.         |
| C H E N | 2. I often have a gnawing feeling in my stomach.          |
| C H E N | 3. When someone mentions food I love, I feel like eating. |
| C H E N | 4. I feel lightheaded after not eating for hours.         |
| C H E N | 5. When I drive by a fast-food restaurant, I want to eat. |
| C H E N | 6. There is a time every day when I feel hungry.          |

See page 4 for answers.

Remember, feed the physiological drive of hunger; manage cravings by using the strategies on the left and not forbidding favorite foods from the diet.

\*Courtesy of MayoClinic.com

\*\*Courtesy of Weight Management Center, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center  
Craving vs. Hunger researched and compiled by Kristen Pearson, Nutrition Major, Class of 2007.

## Late Night Snacks... What to Avoid?

Pizza · Mozzarella sticks · Burgers · Fries  
Fried dough · Soda/ juice beverages  
Candy · Potato Chips · Ice cream



These snacks are high in fat and/or sugar, resulting in excess calories. Also take a look at how much you are eating.

# Stress Can Affect Your Health



Eating well can help control stress by giving your body the nutrients it needs. Your body deals with stress better if it is well nourished. Exercising can also help relieve some stress and relieve anxiety. Stress reduces the absorption of certain nutrients, which may potentially produce a nutrient deficiency or aggravate pre-existing ones.

Nutrients that can help repair these effects are:

**CALORIES:** Calories should come primarily from grains (preferably whole grains), protein (including dairy), fruits and vegetables.

**PROTEIN:** Meat, dairy products, and legumes (dried peas and beans) and skim milk

**VITAMIN C:** Oranges, kiwi, strawberries, grapefruit, green/red peppers, cauliflower

**B-VITAMINS:** Meat, seafood, legumes (dried peas and beans), whole grains, enriched breads and cereals, dairy products and leafy green vegetables

**MAGNESIUM:** Tofu, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, wheat germ and nuts

## 7 Ways to Fend off Late Night Cravings:

1. Eat more food throughout the day and don't skip meals. Overeating at night often occurs if you haven't eaten enough during the day. Skipping meals may cause excessive eating at your next meal or in the evening.
2. Keep low-calorie snacks handy such as fruit, granola bars, healthy beverages on hand. Light popcorn or calorie controlled snack packs may be the answer to a late night snack attack! This helps eliminate an excess of eating.
3. Prepare for future evening cravings. If you know you will be studying late at the library, bring fresh fruit, granola bars, and bottled water with you so that you aren't tempted by the food options at the Procrastination Station. For example, Bagel and Cream Cheese = 390 calories whereas an apple is about 80 calories.
4. Go to sleep earlier. Many people eat for energy to stay up later. If you make a habit of getting more sleep, the extra food needed for late night energy may not be necessary.
5. Do an activity with your friends that involves your hands. Rather than ordering food with your friends, do an activity, like playing video games or cards that involves your hands. Your hands will be busy with the activity rather than putting food in your mouth.
6. Drink plenty of water. People often mistake thirst for hunger. If you have been drinking lots of caffeinated beverages to stay awake, it is very possible you are dehydrated. Before eating a mini-meal at 11 pm, try drinking pure water.
7. Chew sugar-free gum. If you feel the urge to chew while studying for finals, try different flavors of sugar-free gum! Your mouth will be satisfied, and the pages of your book won't get sticky and greasy.

## Preferred Late Night Snacks:

Aim for late night snacks to be 200 calories or less

Whole grain toast with 1 tsp peanut butter

Whole grain cereal with low fat/skim milk

Yogurt with granola

Nut and seed mixes

Granola bars

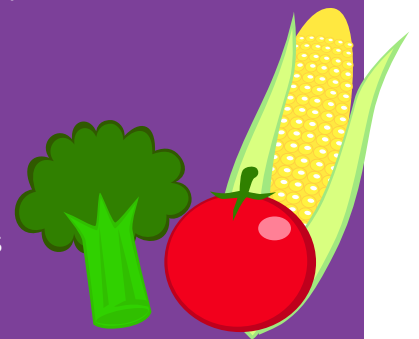
Salad with 1 tsp dressing

Fresh fruits and yogurt

Fresh vegetables with hummus

Popcorn w/little butter

100% juice



These snacks are high in fiber, protein, vitamins and mineral and will help your body deal with stress than more popular items such as pizza, burgers, fried dough, etc.

# Moderation is Key!

When late night caloric consumption is not factored into your daily allowance, it can result in weight gain; however, it is not the time of day that is promoting the weight gain, but the overall caloric consumption and possible lack of exercise. Eat in moderation which means "being within reasonable limits, not excessive or extreme." Here are some suggestions to improve your eating habits:

- Eat a minimum of three meals per day. It will also help satisfy your appetite so that you won't find yourself overeating at mealtime.
- Don't skip meals. Eat a high fiber breakfast for satiety (feeling of fullness).
- Don't go more than 3-5 hours between meals. It can sap energy and lead to overeating at the next meal. Eat/chew slowly - it takes 20 minutes for the appetite center in your brain to get the message that you are full. If you eat too quickly, you will probably eat more than you need before your brain sends out a signal that you are full.
- Don't eat on the run. Take 20 minutes to relax and eat between classes.
- Put your fork down after you take a bite of food. Do not pick up the fork again until you have swallowed all the food in your mouth.
- Only eat when you are hungry.
- Eat healthy snacks between meals.
- Eat smaller portions.
- Don't multi-task (eat and do homework).
- Be conscious of what and how much you eat late at night.



## ANSWERS TO HUNGER/CRAVING QUIZ:

Situations 1,3, and 5 indicate cravings (C).

Situations 2 and 4 indicate hunger (H).

Situation 6 indicates either cravings or hunger (E).

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*Winner of twelve national awards from National Association of College and University Food Services:*

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