
Fitness Tips

by Cari Draft Elliott, BS, CPT - ACE-Certified Personal Trainer

Why isn't it good to skip meals?

***Question:** I keep hearing how it's so terrible skip breakfast, but I'm never hungry in the morning. What's the big deal if I skip meals?*

Answer: It sounds like a no-brainer that skipping meals should do no harm. But the bottom line is that if you go too long without eating, you are likely to eat too much at the next opportunity. Therefore, skipping breakfast (or any meal, really!) will catch up with you eventually. In fact, adding healthy snacks or grazing actually **prevents** overeating!

Consider these other consequences of meal skipping:

* **Poor performance.** Meal skippers don't perform as well. They accomplish less, are easily drained, and are slower at decision-making.

* **Brain drain.** The brain's exclusive fuel, glucose, is compromised within four to six hours when you neglect to eat. That's because glucose is stored in the liver as glycogen and runs out during this time period. The liver is the "regulator" of blood sugar. When blood glucose dips too low, the liver converts glycogen into glucose and releases it into the blood. But if its glycogen has been depleted, the body has to turn to less efficient fueling methods.

* **Calorie loading.** Calorie loading easily occurs if you eat just one meal a day (usually dinner). Eating just one large meal tends to overwhelm your body with calories that it doesn't need at that time. It's like plugging all your home appliances into one plug. Even though the entire electrical system can handle all the appliances, if they're concentrated on just one circuit, you'll blow a fuse. It's better to spread the nutrient load.

Despite the known side effects of skipping meals, it's easy to get caught in the trap of doing without. The breakfast skippers that I work with say, "I'm just not hungry in the morning." If you're the same way, it's likely that you've **conditioned** your body over a number of years not to be hungry. When hunger is ignored often enough, you don't feel it! Nonetheless, your body still needs fuel. Feed it!

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