

Curb Nighttime Eating

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

It's common for healthy eating plans to go awry in the evenings. Snacking while watching TV often leads to distracted and mindless eating. Chances are that means your fullness cues are ignored and portions are larger than usual. If you're tempted by potato chips and ice cream after 8 p.m., here are eight ways to deal with the nightly snack attack.



- 1. Assess your appetite.** Are you snacking because you're truly hungry, or is it out of habit or boredom? Rate your hunger on a scale from 1 to 10 and eat a portion to satisfy your true hunger level.
- 2. Grant yourself permission.** If you're always hungry in the evening, listen to your body. Make an evening snack a standard part of your daily eating habits, and choose a satisfying, nourishing mini-meal instead of a large quantity of ultra-processed foods.
- 3. Enjoy an evening treat but control the portion.** Have one portion on a plate or bowl, rather than eating out of the product container.
- 4. Snack on whole vegetables and fruit (not juice).** The fiber and fluid in them can help you feel full and satisfied for relatively few calories.
- 5. Prevent distractions.** Mute the TV or put down your phone while eating. Focus on enjoying your food instead.
- 6. Eat regularly.** Sometimes night snacking is an indication that you're not eating enough during the day. Make sure to have regular meals and snacks.
- 7. Choose wisely.** Stock the kitchen with nourishing snacks, such as fruit, vegetables, yogurt, nuts, seeds, popcorn, edamame and hummus.
- 8. Do something else.** If you aren't hungry at night but eat due to boredom, change it up. Go for a walk, call a friend, create a games night or book club, or prep for your next meal.



Health from Head to Toe

Ready for your routine health checkup? This review can inform you and your health care providers about your current health condition, needs and goals. It typically includes an evaluation of your circulatory, digestive, muscular, respiratory and nervous systems as well as your mental health status.

Regular checkups can result in the detection and treatment of chronic diseases, such as high blood pressure and elevated cholesterol levels, and identify the need for screenings, such as a colonoscopy or a mammogram.

Preparing for your routine checkup? Usually, there's nothing special you need to do. If you are having blood work done, you may be asked to fast and drink only water for a specified period of time before your appointment. Provide a list of prescription and over-the-counter medications and supplements you take regularly.

It's never too late to establish daily habits for better health.

Research and talk to your provider about possible dietary changes and suitable exercise routines that you enjoy and can help with weight loss or health goals.

Practical ways to improve your health from head to toe: Pick one lifestyle habit that requires changing. Maybe it's eating differently, your exercise routine, sleep schedule or how you cope with stress. Formulate a plan to implement change. It takes a few weeks for a new habit to stick. Once the new healthy habit becomes routine, add another new habit if needed.



Lunge into Health

If you want to strengthen your legs, take a plunge and lunge. The lunge can improve your lower body strength, balance and stability. It's a body resistance exercise that especially targets the quadriceps and hamstring muscles in your thighs, lower leg muscles and the gluteal muscles in your buttocks.

Lunges engage your core muscles, too, including those of the pelvis, lower back, hips and stomach. This exercise is a good way to train if you play sports that involve lunging, such as tennis, basketball and soccer.

The lunge requires no exercise equipment and no trips to the gym. If you are ready to try lunging, follow these steps:

1. Start by standing up comfortably, then step ahead with one foot and lean forward until your knee reaches a 90-degree angle to the floor, keeping it centered over your foot.
2. Lower your rear knee until the shin is parallel to the floor or ground.
3. Then return to your starting position. You should feel some tension, but not pain, in your legs.

Can't lower your knee to a 90-degree angle? Just go as low as it feels comfortable. Do as many repetitions as you can but stop if you are tired or feel muscle fatigue.

To learn more, search for **5 lunge variations for leaner legs** at [acefitness.org](https://www.acefitness.org). Always check with your health care provider before starting any new exercise if you have any health conditions, such as heart disease, or you're not used to regular physical activity.

Personalities of Happy People

Where does happiness come from? Our bodies produce certain chemicals that regulate our moods. Called happy hormones, these are chemicals in your system that promote positive mood and feelings. They include:

- **The hormone serotonin**, which plays several roles in your body, including influencing learning, memory and happiness, as well as regulating body temperature, sleep, sexual behavior and hunger. Lack of enough serotonin may play a role in depression, anxiety, mania and other health conditions.
- **The hormone dopamine** is called the feel-good hormone because it can produce a sense of pleasure. This sensation might give you the motivation to do positive things or feel good during your day. Dopamine is considered part of your mental reward system.

Psychologists call happiness an ongoing emotion of joy and satisfaction that can be associated with an overall positive attitude. Whether you're a happy person or frequently feel unhappiness, you can transform your life to become happier.

Signs that you are happy may include:

- Feeling satisfied and rewarded.
- Relaxing and experiencing less stress.
- Having enjoyable relationships with people.
- Sharing your joy with others.
- Being more open to where life takes you.
- Feeling that you have accomplished (or will accomplish) what you want in life.



The more frequently you feel these positive emotions, the stronger and more satisfied you can feel.

Pre-Surgery Consultation: What to expect

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD

Are you planning to have surgery? A pre-op checkup for major procedures is often required, usually within a month before the surgery. This gives your health care provider time to treat any medical problems you might have before surgery.

Preoperative evaluation: Your health care provider will likely review your medical history and perform a physical exam. Further evaluation may be needed if you have diabetes, sleep apnea, heart problems, high blood pressure, clotting problems or other disorders. A history of heavy smoking or difficulty walking up the stairs may also require appraisal. Make sure your surgeon has your pre-op checkup reports and other evaluations to reduce the risk of delaying surgery. Some hospitals may also require you to talk to an anesthesia nurse or physician before surgery to discuss your health.

Pre-surgical testing: Your surgeon or health care provider may recommend certain tests before surgery. These tests can depend on your age, general health, risk factors, medical problems, and the type of surgery you're having.

Common tests include a complete blood count, blood sugar and kidney and liver function. A chest X-ray to check your lungs or an electrocardiogram to check your heart may be recommended. Other testing may be required, including a heart exercise stress test, lung function tests, or endoscopy of your colon or stomach. An MRI scan, CT scan or ultrasound may have to be completed and reviewed before surgery. Get your pre-op checkup as soon as you can so you have enough time to complete everything required.



The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Personalized Weight Loss Plan**, is at personalbest.com/extras/24V1tools.

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