

Swasthya - The Physical Body

The Importance of Three Meals A Day With No/Minimal Snacking

Over the last 10 years there has been a huge sea-change in the understanding of the functioning of the human digestive system.

Going back 8-10 years, there was a big drive to suggest that eating four, five or even six small meals a day was the best way to fuel the body to support optimal weight and energy.

However, this model was based upon research on elite athletes, probably the only group of people who benefit from eating in such a way, for the simple fact that their energy and calorie demands are so high.

But when this approach to eating was then transferred across to non-elite athletes (i.e. almost everyone else) it was consistently shown to induce a whole host of digestive issues such as weight gain, digestive sluggishness, bloating, gastric cramping, poor energy, low mood and general digestive discomfort to name but a few issues.

Why is this the case?

There are many reasons but the main and most important one is that the human digestive tract was not designed, evolutionary speaking, to graze. It was designed to receive food, then go through a period of fasting for at least 3-hours, before eating again.

This 3-4 hour period of fasting between meals provides the digestive system with the time it needs to efficiently and effectively digest, metabolize, assimilate and absorb the previous meal before the next meal is consumed. This results in better nutrient profiles, higher levels of energy, a superior production of Ojas, a reduction in dysbiosis/gut based toxins and a healthier microbiome.

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But if we eat our breakfast, then snack through to lunch, eat lunch and then snack through to dinner, eat dinner and then continue to snack into the evening, the digestive system never gets a rest. And like everything else in existence, the functioning of anything that runs without a rest deteriorates until it breaks down.

In terms of human digestion, this “breaking down” looks like the common digestive symptoms and poor energy and vitality (i.e. low Ojas) that is so endemic in our Western cultures.

As such, one of the most important dietary changes we can make to support 1) optimal digestion, 2) the prevention of gut-based toxins, 3) a healthy microbiome, 4) optimal nutrient absorption and 5) the cultivation of radiant levels of Ojas, Swasthya and energy in the physical body is to adopt an eating pattern that is characterised by eating only three meals a day, with minimal/no snacking.

What If I Need To Snack?

This is a great question as many people often require a small snack between meals to help sustain energy through the day. This is particularly true if you are physically working hard or exercising a lot. If you do need to snack, then prioritise the consumption of high Ojas foods that provide huge benefit with little risk.

For help with this, please refer to the high Ojas recipes and tonics in Module 3 of this series and also the high Ojas food lists found in Module 2. Also check out the many snack recipes in the recipe guides in the Ayurvedic Mentor website.

Eating Times Are Also Essential

The final point to consider is that if we are eating three meals a day, it is really important that we eat these meals at the correct times each day.

The reason this is so important is because over the course of each day, the human metabolism experiences three digestive peaks. During these peaks, our body secretes more hydrochloric acid, digestive enzymes and much else besides to ensure that we fully and effectively digest the food we eat. Thus if we “hit” these peaks, it means that we digest our food more effectively, extract more nutrients from the food we eat and clear waste from the body more efficiently. The upshot of this is a healthier gut and microbiome, enhanced energy and vitality and a higher level of Ojas and Swasthya in the body.

But if we “miss” these peaks and eat outside of them, our body simply doesn’t have the digestive capacity to break down the food we eat. This leads to poor nutrient absorption, weakness and fatigue, the build-up of toxins, reduced microbiome health and a general lowering of Swasthya and Ojas in the body.

The 3-Meals a Day Challenge

To help support optimal gut health as a precursor to the cultivation of robust levels of Ojas and Swasthya, your Challenge is to:

1. Try to only eat three nutritious meals a day with minimal snacking.
2. If you do need to snack then ensure you do so on high Ojas foods as per the instructions
3. Above.
4. Try to ensure you eat your meals in keeping with the above times to ensure efficient and effective digestion.