

TIPS TO STOP NIGHT EATING

Imagine you are trapped on an island with your family. The only foods available are fruit, vegetables, grains and legumes. There is an abundant supply of these foods but nothing else. Do you think you would have a weight problem? Would you feel compelled to eat all night? Would you be addicted to apples to the point that it would affect your mental health with obsession? Of course not.

Correcting a behavior like night eating deals with both physical and psychological factors. It is important to eat a clean diet at the proper times of day. This will help you stabilize the physical causes that are making you eat. For example, out of whack blood sugar levels.

Developing new healthy habits helps you tackle the psychological factors. This helps you deal with the problem in a positive, life-affirming way. Consistency is key.

2 – 4 MEALS A DAY – NO SNACKING

Stopping night eating starts with breakfast. When you eat at night you are not hungry the next morning. This moves your entire eating window until later in the day.

It is common for people to “be good” and eat very little during the day and then once they start eating, they can’t stop. So, start with eating 3 meals a day at normal meal times for your schedule. Get used to no snacking. Give your stomach a break to digest your last meal before adding more food. You may be desensitized to the feeling of true hunger.

STABILIZE YOUR BLOOD SUGAR

Stabilize your blood sugar with fiber-rich/water filled foods. This means lots of fresh whole fruit and vegetables. Also, make sure you include a lot of whole food ‘steamy’ starches. Starches provide satiety so incorporate starches at every meal. Starches include:

* Grains like rice, oatmeal, millet and quinoa.
* Steamy vegetables like potatoes, sweet potatoes, squash, corn and peas.
* The entire legume (bean) and lentil family.

Processed foods containing starches have been stripped of most their fiber and water. Fiber and water are essential to stabilize blood sugar.

Do not eat dessert. This will force your blood sugar to spike. This causes a big insulin release which then forces your blood sugar way down. This sudden drop gives you massive cravings.

If you have eaten enough starch with dinner, you will be comfortably full. And your blood sugar will be stable because you have eaten enough fiber.

Do some bulk cooking. Bake extra potatoes. Make extra rice. Make big pots of chilis and soups.

Divide the extra food into individual serving containers. Store them in the fridge or freezer. This ensures you always have some satisfying starches ready to go.

INTERMITTENT FASTING

Intermittent fasting supports your digestive system by giving it a much-needed break. It gives the stomach and small intestine a chance to completely digest, absorb and assimilate the nutrients. It also gives the cleansing organs an opportunity to renew and repair the body. So, you can choose:

* A 12-hour feeding window to maintain weight
* An 8-hour feeding window to lose weight (This is assuming that what you are feeding on has a low caloric density.)

3 HOURS WITHOUT FOOD BEFORE BEDTIME

These three hours are important to move the food from the stomach into the small intestine. This time is especially important if you suffer from acid reflux/GERD. Going to bed with an empty stomach means there is nothing to back up on you when you lay down.

But, if you are still eating animal protein with your starches, this can slow down digestion to as long as 5 hours. Ingested food can remain in the stomach for 2-5 hours. This depends on:

* The amount of food
* The acid pH of the food
* The amount of fat in the food. Higher fat foods spend more time in the stomach.

So, it is in your best interest to stop eating 3 hours before bedtime. This at least gives your body a fighting chance to get some of the food out of the stomach.

If three hours seems overwhelming at first, start with 1 hour before bedtime for a week. Then 2 hours in week 2 and finally 3 hours in week 3.

WHAT TO DO AFTER DINNER

You need to develop a personal strategy that will keep you from going back for more food. Here are some tips that others have found useful.

* After dinner clean the kitchen. Wash the dishes and wipe down the counters. Then kitchen is closed for the night.
* Throw leftovers away. If there are just a few mouthfuls and not enough for a meal but too much for your caloric needs for the day toss them. If are tempted to retrieve them from the garbage, put dish soap or salt all over it. Better still take the garbage out after you have cleaned the kitchen.
* Some people like to eat just a little more after dinner and don't know why. They find themselves cleaning the pots with a spoon and right into their mouths. If you do this, watch Dr. Doug Lisle’s talk on Cramming. [Dr. Doug Lisle, PhD: The Cram Circuit - the story of binge eating and overeating. - Bing video](https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=youtube+dr+doug+lisle+the+conditioned+cram&docid=608047707138191134&mid=A71C6115A6EC522A9063A71C6115A6EC522A9063&view=detail&FORM=VIRE) This will help you understand why you do this and how to stop. Knowledge is power.
* Brush and floss your teeth. Straight away. This cleans your mouth and palette. This makes it easier for you to resist eating again after your mouth is clean. Your dentist will appreciate it.

Fill your time before bed with health promoting and sleep promoting activities. Things to fill your time:

* Go for a relaxing walk around the block
* Do some yoga or stretching
* Do some self care like an Epsom salt bath or have a shower.
* If you eat because you are bored start reading in bed. Read fiction in a genre that you enjoy.
* If you eat because you are lonely, make a point of calling a friend or family member for a chat. Or again read a book with characters you enjoy.
* If you eat because you are stressed, give up caffeine products. Coffee, tea, caffeinated sodas, energy drinks and chocolate. Caffeine keeps your brain racing and disrupts sleep. Try herbal teas. Chamomile is especially good in the evening to help your brain wind down for sleep.
* Develop good sleep hygiene. No electronics in the bedroom. Blue light from screens disrupts sleep.

REMOVE ALL SNACK FOODS CONTAINING SUGAR, OIL, AND SALT

Get rid of all snack foods that contain sugar oil and salt. They are highly addictive, expensive and always taste like more.

All eating provides some pleasure. Dopamine is released in the brain when you eat making you feel good. Processed food chemicals like sugar, oil and salt cause a bigger release of dopamine. So, they affect the brain in a drug-like way causing you to eat more. And everyone wants to feel better but this high is only temporary.

Over years, like any addictive behavior, the dopamine set point is raised so the amount of chemical ‘food’ that used to satisfy you and make you happy no longer does. You are compelled to eat more just to get the same ‘high’ from dopamine.

A smoker doesn’t start off smoking 2 packs a day. An alcoholic doesn’t start off with a bottle of vodka either. But over time, to get that same good feeling, the drug compels you to take in more of it. And with food, you end up with a visible by-product. Obesity.

The only reason you should be eating is for true hunger. If you are only hungry for ‘special’ foods that is not real hunger. You are addicted to that food.

It triggers the dopamine circuits in your brain and makes you feel good. It momentarily takes you out of the pain of your loneliness, boredom, and stress. Just like a smoker addicted to cigarettes it is part habit and part addiction.

You are not eating from true hunger because you have already finished dinner. You are eating for the ‘taste’ usually for sweet or salty and it is NEVER ENOUGH. You can eat the whole bag of chips or the entire chocolate bar. It is a food addiction.

For more on food addiction, watch Dr. Doug Lisle [The Pleasure Trap v1 – Esteem Dynamics](https://esteemdynamics.com/2020/03/26/the-pleasure-trap/).

CONDUCT AN EXPERIMENT

Give these few techniques a try for 10 days and give it 100% of your effort. Use the check sheet below to help you along. If you can do this for 10 days in a row and do an excellent job, you will feel so much better about yourself mentally and physically. Good Luck.

10 DAY DAILY CHECKLIST

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| BREAKFAST STARCH |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| LUNCH STARCH |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| DINNER STARCH |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| FRESH FRUIT |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| NO SNACKING 3 HOURS BEFORE BED |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| CLEAN AND CLOSE THE KITCHEN  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| BRUSH TEETH |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| CAFFEINE FREE ALL DAY |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6-8 HOURS OF SLEEP |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| NO ELECTRONIC DEVICES 1 HR BEFORE BED |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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Note: I’ve left some spaces so that you can add things you would like to add. Make them super simple. Nothing too ambitious or you will get disheartened and give up. You can add simple things like light walking, phoning a friend, reading, crafts, puzzles, or coloring. It doesn’t really matter what it is. Just things that you know you can do for a few minutes every day that will help you keep your mind off night eating.

Good luck and let me know how you do either by sending me a message through this website: [GET IN TOUCH - Karen Warwick RHN](https://www.karenwarwickrhn.com/contact-karen.html)

Or by posting on my business Facebook page: [(20+) Karen Warwick RHN | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/karenwarwickrhn)

Here’s wishing your great success and improved health.

Karen Warwick RHN

P.S. If you are looking to lose weight and improve your health. Check out my book and online challenges. You can find details and links on the home page of my website: [Karen Warwick RHN - Home](https://www.karenwarwickrhn.com/).