

Surprising Facts About Not Eating Enough

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Millions of Americans read diet books and watch weight loss competitions on TV. It might come as a surprise to learn that undereating can also be harmful to your health because the subject receives much less attention.

Sensible dieting or intermittent fasting can be safe for most adults. However, consuming insufficient calories on a regular basis often leads to chronic fatigue and other serious issues.

Are you eating enough?

Find out more about how undereating affects your body and how you can overcome it.

Understanding Undereating:

1. **Recognize the symptoms.** Some signs of undereating are easy to spot. You'll probably feel tired and your skin may look dull. You may also experience hair loss and constipation.
2. **Protect your body.** There are other symptoms that are less visible. When your body is starved for fuel, it starts to break down muscle and organ tissue. Your immune system becomes weaker, so you're more likely to become ill. You may also develop osteoporosis and anemia.
3. **Diet safely.** Eating too little and exercising too much can backfire when you're trying to lose weight because your metabolism will slow down. **The National**

Institute of Health recommends a minimum of 1,200 calories a day for women and 1,500 for men to prevent malnutrition.

4. **Deal with stress.** Maybe you've lost your appetite because of disturbing events like losing your job or going through a divorce. Build your strength back up by talking with supportive friends and family and developing new interests.

5. **See your doctor.** Weight loss can also be a sign of medical conditions including depression and eating disorders. Your doctor can help rule out other causes and adjust your medications if needed.

6. **Ask a dietician.** Your doctor may refer you to a registered dietician or you can find one through the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. **They're food and nutrition experts who can help you to create an individual program that works for you.**

Overcoming Undereating:

1. **Love your body.** Are you eating less because you want to look like the celebrities you see online? Learn to accept your body and **play up your strong points** like a long neck or strong shoulders.

2. **Eat smaller, but more, meals.** If eating more is a struggle for you, try preparing more meals each day. Break a bigger breakfast and lunch down into four separate servings.

3. **Snack more.** Eat between meals too. Make it convenient by bringing along your own supplies like smoothies, yogurt, and nuts.

4. **Focus on whole foods. The quality of your food matters as much as the**

amount. Avoid filling up on junk food with excess sugar and salt that cause inflammation and other troubles. Stick to healthy fare like vegetables, whole grains, and fish.

5. **Increase protein.** Foods rich in protein are especially helpful for providing energy and strengthening your muscles and bones. **Include some protein in each meal and snack** so you'll be able to digest it more effectively.

6. **Choose healthy fats.** Consuming more fat is a simple way to take in more calories from the same amount of food. Add a little more olive oil to hummus and roasted potatoes. Switch to whole fat dairy products. Start the day with a serving of salmon or other fatty fish.

7. **Take supplements.** Undereating often creates nutritional deficiencies, so **you may need supplements at least temporarily.** Follow your doctor's recommendations which may include calcium, iron, and specific vitamins.

Maintaining a healthy weight lowers your risk for health complications and increases your chances for living a long and active life. Talk with your doctor about how to develop a diet that keeps you energetic and well-nourished without gaining or losing too many pounds.