

Skipping breakfast may be healthy way to shed weight

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If you skip breakfast, don't worry about overeating at lunch or the rest of the day, report Cornell nutritional scientists July 2 in the journal *Physiology and Behavior*. In fact, nixing breakfast a few times a week may be a reasonable strategy to shed pounds, they say.

"There's a fundamental belief that if you don't eat breakfast, you will compensate for the lost calories at lunch or later in the day. We've found that there is no caloric compensation in a normal group of eaters," said study senior author David Levitsky, Cornell professor of nutritional sciences and of psychology. "If you skip breakfast, you may be hungrier, but you won't eat enough calories to make up for the lost breakfast." As a result, your total daily caloric intake will decrease.

The study, "Effect of Skipping Breakfast on Subsequent Energy Intake," is co-authored by Carly R. Pacanowski, a doctoral candidate in the field of nutritional sciences.

The researchers either fed or withheld breakfast from a group of volunteers, half who were regular breakfast eaters and half who regularly skipped breakfast. They observed how much the participants ate the rest of the day. Although the breakfast skippers were hungrier than the breakfast eaters, they did not eat more at lunch or at any other eating occasion. In fact, by the end of the day, the breakfast skippers consumed an average of 408 fewer calories.

These findings, say Pacanowski and Levitsky, are consistent with

previous studies on the effects of skipping breakfast and subsequent intake. The Cornell researchers challenge the common belief that eating breakfast daily is essential for [weight management](#). People who skip breakfast consume fewer calories and may reap [health benefits](#) by eating less.

"The trend in American society is that the population – particularly young adults – is [gaining weight](#), about one pound a year. So the population needs strategies to help them prevent [weight gain](#)," said Pacanowski. "We need to revisit the assumption that we must always eat breakfast, and learn if we really need to eat breakfast all the time."

Said Levitsky: "As a society, why are we obese? We are getting fatter because we are consuming more calories than we use. It is currently believed that humans possess biological mechanisms that regulate our eating. We have observed in this study and others that this mechanism regulates our intake very poorly. Consequently, under eating at one meal does not result in overeating at the next." He explained, "This also means that if we overeat at a meal we won't automatically reduce our intake at the next."

"I realize that skipping breakfast runs counter to common belief – that breakfast is an important meal for weight control, but the data do not support this view. Of course, these results apply to healthy adults – if you're diabetic or hypoglycemic, for example, you need to eat breakfast to maintain glucose levels," Levitsky said. "But generally, we must learn to eat less and occasionally skipping [breakfast](#) may be a reasonable way to accomplish this."

Provided by Cornell University

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