

## High Energy Grazing

by Anthony Head

Who isn't guilty of skipping breakfast on a busy morning or lunch when a jam-packed schedule has you running like crazy? What usually follows is that awful time when your mood takes a hit and energy levels plummet. Then there's the missed-meal rebound effect—you know, when you finally eat and find you're so ravenous that you end up over-indulging. It's a vicious circle. But there is a way to eat that wards off hunger pangs and prevents dramatic energy dips: It's a simple technique called "grazing."

### Nibbling for good nutrition

In place of the standard three-meal-a-day regimen (which can be hard to stick with) you divide your dining experiences into five or six small meals. Another option is to lighten up your three main meals, and supplement them with a couple of snacks. Spreading your nourishment throughout the day keeps the body humming along at a nice, smooth clip. The biggest benefit of this plan? Sustained energy.

By evening out your calorie intake, grazing keeps your body consistently fueled with nutrients, which leads to better mental and physical performance, a brighter mood and less fatigue. What's more, the right balance of carbohydrates, proteins and fats stabilizes your metabolism.

According to nutritionists, grazing is a common, natural habit that can provide better nutrition. "Natural grazers may be born with an instinct for consuming lots of mini-meals and tend to be healthy," says Georgianna Donadio, PhD, director of Boston's National Institute of Whole Health. "Many women do this naturally, and vegetarian men tend to graze more than nonvegetarian men."

For those who don't have this instinctual knack, snacking and smaller meals may take a little getting used to, especially if you were raised to clean your plate or told not to eat before supper. Even today's moms often think kids will spoil their appetites or end up overweight if they chow down between meals. But when grazing is done correctly and involves wellbalanced mini-meals and snacks, it can help you maintain a healthy weight and even slim down. Because you sustain a feeling of food

satisfaction, you ate less likely to binge on unhealthy foods or overeat at one sitting.

### **Making the switch**

Grazing begins at breakfast with a balance of carbohydrates (cereal, toast, fruit), protein (soymilk, yogurt, eggs, tofu scrambler) and fats (peanut butter, nuts, soy margarine). "You need to get healthy sugars from complex carbohydrates to your brain, nervous system and lungs," says Donadio. "If you don't give your body nutritious foods at the start of the day, your blood sugar will be low and probably remain that way."

Once you've had your morning meal, there are two ways to continue the regimen. The first is to go by the clock and eat something every two to three hours. Another is to take your cues from hunger and reach for an appropriate snack when your body says you want one. Whichever method you choose, you'll probably still feel hungry at lunch- and dinner- times, because the mini-meal isn't supposed to make you full. The point is to eat enough to be satisfied, so that you won't feel famished or have food cravings later on.

## the science

Grazing works well because of when you eat—and what.

- Complex carbohydrates (whole-grain bread, beans, brown rice and vegetables) are favored over simple carbs (white bread, white rice and pasta) because they are slower to digest and provide sustained energy.
- Protein (nuts, tofu, beans, cheese) further slows the absorption of carbohydrates to make energy last longer. It also gives you a "full" feeling after eating and helps with alertness.
- Healthy fats (olive, roasted nut and sesame oils, avocados) add flavor and transport key vitamins throughout the body.