Ever worried about snacking on pizza after 9 PM because it might go straight to your hips? Does eating at night really make you gain weight? Numerous studies have shown that the time of day you eat does not make a difference in fat metabolism and storage, so no need to worry about eating your dinner late at night. In the grand scheme of things meal time doesn’t matter.

One recent study done in Spain did show that eating lunch before or after 3 PM did affect body weight. The study suggested that those who ate after three weighed more. However, no weight difference was found regarding what time dinner was eaten. Also the study was a cross sectional study which is suggestive but not confirming.

What has been concluded correlates to the amount of calories you consume throughout the entire day. As long as you don’t eat more calories than your body can burn in a day, you won’t gain weight. The time of day that you choose to eat these calories doesn’t matter.

The weight gain problem arises because the calories we consume at night usually put us over our recommended daily intake. The cookies and milk or extra scoop of ice cream we decide to eat after dinner is what makes our calories add up to more than 2000. Try not to indulge in mindless eating of high and empty calorie foods late at night. Sometimes, after a stressful day, we sit down on the couch and are halfway through a bag of chips before we even realize we were eating. This is when the pounds start to add up.

Try to plan out your meals and calories throughout the day so you can avoid excess consumption. The time of day you decide to eat doesn’t matter but be conscious of what you are eating so you don’t exceed your recommended caloric intake.

**Overnight Oatmeal recipe**

1 banana, smashed
1/3 cup dry old fashioned oats
1 cup yogurt
Frozen blueberries
Sliced almonds

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Let sit in the refrigerator overnight and you have breakfast ready to go in the morning. Any combination of fruit or yogurt will work! Oatmeal contains a good portion of fiber to keep you full and satisfied through morning classes. The fruit will also energize you to help stay awake and focus. You can also choose Greek yogurt to add some protein. In addition, almonds contain healthy fats to promote an overall healthy meal.
Spring is here and with it comes early spring produce and an opportunity to spend more time outside. Increased activity levels require more nutrients. Vitamin C is one of the most important vitamins because it helps your body to fight illness and protects cells from oxidative damage.

Increase vitamin C in your diet with spring produce like kale, spinach, green peas, grapefruit, kiwi and strawberries. If your plan is to shake off the cabin fever with a great workout in the outdoors don’t forget to increase your intake or antioxidants. Exercise is great for you but all that strain on your tissue and increased oxygen consumption produces free radicals which can be harmful to your body. Antioxidants clean up free radicals and protect against a variety of diseases such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, cataracts, lowered immune function, and neurodegenerative diseases.

These powerful additions to your diet can be found in blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, apples, and even artichokes to name a few.

Simply too Sweet?

Sugar is a naturally occurring substance found in fruits, vegetables, grains and dairy products. Sugars are the building blocks of carbohydrates which provide our bodies with energy, especially the brain and nervous system. White sugar, or granulated sugar, is made by processing a plant to separate the sugar from the other parts of the plant. The most common sources of sugar are sugar beets and sugar cane. Other types of sugar used as sweeteners are honey, agave and high fructose corn syrup just to name a few. You can identify sugar sources on ingredient labels because they contain the word sugar or end in “ose”. Most research shows all of these sugars to be similar in their physiologic effects; however the taste is very different.

Sugar has been in the media a lot recently in relation to this country’s obesity epidemic. Added sugar has become very prevalent in the American diet and is expected to be addressed in the 2015 Dietary Guidelines to be released later this year. According to the USDA consumption of caloric sweeteners increased 39% between the 1950’s and the year 2000.

The average American now consumes 30 teaspoons of sugar per day, which adds up to 476 calories or 152 pounds per year! These statistics correlate with the rise in incidence of obesity in the US and have led to plenty of speculation on whether there is something about sugar that makes it particularly addictive or if the nutritive properties of sugar can somehow increase one’s propensity for obesity. A more obvious answer may be American’s simply consume too much sugar; this is partly due to it’s addition to many items you may not think of. Did you know most purchased pasta sauce contains added sugar; about 2 teaspoons per ½ cup?

No matter what source of sugar you are consuming the key is moderation. Read labels and avoid foods that have more than two sources of sugar listed in their ingredients. Sugars found naturally in foods, like fruits, are your best bet because nature has already combined them with other essential vitamins, minerals and fiber. Use caution when consuming added sugar and try not to replace nutrient dense foods with sugary snacks. The USDA recommends consuming no more than 10 teaspoons (40 grams) of added sugar per day.