

Cutting out late night calories

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(HealthDay)—Losing weight comes down to eating fewer calories than you burn.

But beyond that basic rule, studies done at the Salk Institute in La Jolla, Calif., show that *when* you eat those calories could have an effect on your weight and your health.

Unlike our ancestors who went to sleep at a reasonable hour, people today often burn the midnight oil. If you're also snacking well into the night, you might be thwarting your [weight loss efforts](#).

Researchers compared the effects of a few different diets on two groups of mice. Those with access to a set amount of food for just eight hours a day were healthier and slimmer than those with access to the same number of calories but without time restrictions.

The researchers also tested that theory on a group of [obese mice](#). When their food was limited to nine hours a day, they started losing weight, even though the overall number of calories they ate

didn't change. The same results were seen when they ate between 9 and 12 hours a day, even when the restrictions were eased on weekends, both of which are more realistic for people.

There's also evidence that a shortened eating pattern could prevent obesity, so it's an option to consider regardless of your current [weight](#).

To test restricted eating for yourself, try cutting out all snacks after dinner, or have your last [calories](#) of the day no later than 8 to 12 hours after breakfast.

Remember that it takes time to change behavior, especially when the habit is taking a trip to the fridge before you turn in. It might help to stop eating one hour earlier each week until you reduce your eating "window" to that 8- to 12-hour limit.

More information: The Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics has tips to help you [curb nighttime eating](#), the first step in shortening your eating pattern.

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