

**Ask the Expert Webinar
Supplemental Q&A
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Mindful, intuitive eating for health: ditching the diet and feeding the soul

1. Is replacing normal meat with plant-based meats a healthy eating strategy? Isn't food like Impossible Burgers highly processed?

You can experiment with plant-based meats as a replacement for animal meats to reduce meat intake if you like. However, be cautious of the sodium content in plant-based meat products. Some of them are highly processed and can be very high in sodium. If you are watching your sodium intake or have high blood pressure, I recommend keeping your sodium intake to 1,500 – 2,000 mg per day. If you want to replace some animal meat meals with plant-based proteins that are not highly processed, try some bean-, lentil-, or chickpea-based dishes. You could also use tofu or root vegetables. EatingWell.com has some great vegetarian and vegan recipes.

You can start with one meal a week and increase the frequency if you enjoy them. If not, it is still completely healthy to have lean meats (e.g., skinless chicken, pork tenderloin, ground chicken or turkey, beef tenderloin/sirloin/filet, or 90% lean or higher ground meat) regularly.

2. I get ravenous at around 10 or 11 p.m., about four or five hours after dinner. I'm aware that I should fast after dinner, but a continuous glucose monitor shows predawn glucose drops. I wonder if it would help me to give in to my late-night cravings?

I would suggest you try a small snack prior to bedtime and see if that can help with your predawn glucose drops, especially since you're going a very long time without eating anything. By "small snack," I mean a snack that includes some protein, some healthy fat, and a small amount of carbohydrate. This could be something like:

- 2 Tbsp dried fruit and ¼ cup unsalted or lightly salted nuts
- 1 small apple, orange or banana and 2 Tbsp of almond or peanut butter
- 3 cups of light popcorn and ¼ cup nuts
- Protein shakes that contain around 20 – 30 g of protein and very little added sugar
- Hummus and vegetables
- Greek yogurt and berries
- Low-fat string cheese and crackers



If you are still having issues, I recommend reaching out to your endocrinologist for advice. Alternatively, see if there is a diabetes educator on staff at your endocrinologist's office whom you could speak to.

3. The serving size on most food nutrition labels is not realistic. When will the serving size on most food nutrition labels be updated to better reflect what most people actually eat? I thought it would be done by now.

I would visit USDA.gov and FDA.gov and search "food labels" for information regarding food labels and any updated information on this topic. I do understand how some items seem unrealistic in terms of the amount we actually eat.

I think it is important to listen to what your body needs and fuel it with whole foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish, lean protein, nuts and seeds. This still leaves room for more indulgent items like a scoop of ice cream or a slice of pizza in your eating pattern within reason – just be more mindful of them if you have a history of heart disease, diabetes or any other health conditions directly impacted by diet.

4. Is it true that skim milk is not good since there is no fat to balance the natural sugar in milk?

Skim milk, 1% milk or milk alternatives (soy, almond, oat, etc.) are all very healthy choices. There is natural sugar in milk (lactose) but only minimally more in skim milk vs 1%, 2% or whole milk. If you want a milk lower in sugar there is very little sugar in soy milk or unsweetened almond milk, but skim milk is still a very healthy option. If you do not have a history of high cholesterol and heart disease and prefer the taste of 2%, that would also be an option – it just contains more calories than skim or 1%.

5. When should a person entertain interventions like bariatric surgery?

I would suggest speaking with your physician about this if you have exhausted all options of healthy eating and exercise on your own without success and you need further intervention – especially if weight is impacting your health in a negative way such as high blood pressure or diabetes. There are also weight loss clinics that offer nonsurgical weight loss options, which you may want to consider in addition to surgical weight loss options. If you live near Inova, you can reach out to [Inova Weight Loss Services](#) to get some of your questions and concerns addressed regarding that topic.



6. Do you recommend intermittent fasting to lose weight?

Intermittent fasting is beneficial to some and not to others. I do not recommend it for anyone with a history of diabetes or anyone taking insulin. Going for long periods of time without eating is not always good for blood sugar control. If you try intermittent fasting and find that it is sustainable for you, then it can be a viable option.

Always listen to your body. If you feel like you are starving or going too long without eating, fuel your body with what it needs at that time and not only when you are “supposed to eat.”

7. What are some good foods to control blood sugar?

Pairing protein, fiber and healthy fats with carbohydrate is a great way to help control blood sugar. For snacks, this could be something like:

- 2 Tbsp dried fruit and ¼ cup unsalted or lightly salted nuts
- 1 small apple, orange or banana and 2 Tbsp of almond or peanut butter
- 3 cups of light popcorn and ¼ cup nuts
- Protein shakes that contain around 20 – 30 g of protein and very little added sugar
- Hummus and vegetables
- Greek yogurt and berries
- Low-fat string cheese and crackers

For meals, try to plan for half of the food on your plate to be nonstarchy vegetables like salad greens, broccoli or carrots. Try to eat three to five servings of these every day. Have a protein food at each meal such as chicken, fish, meat, eggs or beans. Try to limit carbohydrates at that meal (e.g., whole grain bread, brown or wild rice, potato, rice, etc.) to about one-quarter of the plate. Having a consistent amount of carbohydrates at each meal, not skipping meals and eating every couple of hours can also help with blood sugar control.

8. Is there a role for fasting in mindful/intuitive eating? I have to admit that I feel very good after more than 20 hours of fasting, but on occasion, it can lead me to overeating. I eat one meal a day, and it's been helpful in losing about 40 pounds over the last four years.

The purpose of mindful and intuitive eating is to be more connected to your body, listening to it and giving it what it needs when it is asking for food. Fuel your body with something healthy if you are hungry. I think if fasting is working for you long term, that is great. You may also benefit from feeding your body if it is hungry at times, which could prevent overeating later.



9. You recommended microwaving produce? Is microwave technology totally safe?

For some individuals, this may be the only way they are able to prepare vegetables due to lack of resources or reduced ability to cook due to health conditions. The food is usually in the microwave for a short amount of time, so it is safe to cook this way. You may want to put food in a microwave-safe dish with a cover. I typically use a variety of methods such as air frying, oven roasting and sautéing on the stove as well as cooking in the microwave, particularly when I am short on time. Using various cooking methods can also cut down on the amount of food you are consistently putting in the microwave.

10. What is your opinion about fruit and veggie supplements like Balance of Nature® or AG1®?

I advise everyone to try to get most of your vitamins and minerals from food first. Sometimes, food has more than what a supplement will provide. I don't think there is any harm in either one of these supplements, but they are not necessary if you have a well-balanced eating pattern with plenty of fruits and vegetables. It also can be hard to determine which supplements might be beneficial, and it's easy to waste your money with so many supplements out there these days. If you are on any medications, I would recommend checking with your doctor before taking any supplements to ensure they do not interact with any medicines you take.

11. With all the recalls of fruits and vegetables and harmful chemicals in oatmeal and cereals, how do we find a good balance of eating well and not getting food poisoning?

I would keep up to date with recalls by visiting [FDA.gov/Safety/Recalls-Market-Withdrawals-Safety-Alerts](https://www.fda.gov/Safety/Recalls-Market-Withdrawals-Safety-Alerts) regularly and avoiding what might be currently recalled. Chemicals have been detected in some of the Quaker Oats products, as well as Cheerios and Lucky Charms. You would have to eat them in extremely large quantities weekly for them to cause food poisoning, but I absolutely understand the reason for concern. If you want to steer clear of those brands altogether, some other options are Edison Grainery, Steel Cut Oats, Bob's Red Mill, Kashi Cereals, Nature's Path, Cascadian Farms, Simple Truth and 365 Old Fashioned Rolled Oats. Organic oats and organic cereals claim to have lower glyphosate levels overall. You can always email the company to ask questions if their oats or cereal is tested for glyphosate.