

# THREE SET MEALS, OR SNACKS ALL DAY?

There's a lot of conflicting info out there on how often we should eat – but it turns out, it's simpler than it seems...

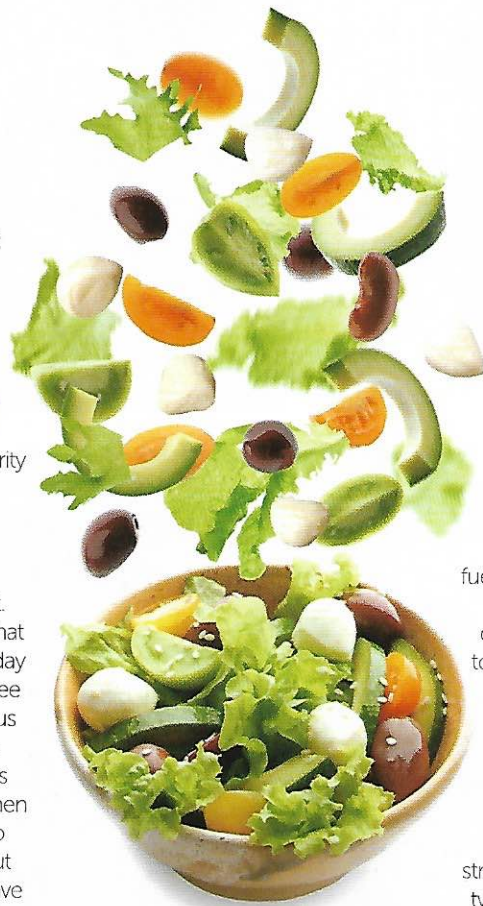


**Sophie Thurner, registered nutritionist and qualified personal trainer at [sophiethurnernutrition.com](http://sophiethurnernutrition.com), says there's a lot of myths floating around regarding meal frequency...**

There's no denying that meal regularity matters – studies have found that irregular eating patterns may have a negative metabolic effect. So, whether we choose to snack or eat regular meals, sticking to one approach is important. One myth that's quite common is the idea that snacking on smaller meals multiple times a day boosts metabolism, compared to having three main meals. This is false; so far, the consensus of research is that increased meal frequency does not enhance metabolic rate – if calories and macronutrient split are kept the same, then meal frequency doesn't make a difference to metabolism. You may be surprised to find out that increased meal frequency appears to have a positive effect on various blood markers of health; particularly LDL and total cholesterol, blood pressure, insulin and glucose secretion. However, there are caveats to this:

- A linear correlation between increased meal frequency and improved blood markers has not been established, meaning that 17 snacks per day, for instance, have not been found to improve glucose tolerance compared to four isocaloric snacks.
- The blood marker benefits were observed in the short term. Whether these positive adaptations occur for longer durations is yet to be studied.
- The observed benefits have been found mostly when calories are restricted.

The physiological effects of meal frequency in humans is not black and white. The best approach would be to follow our preferences, as this increases the likelihood of sticking to that approach and avoiding over- and under-eating.



Are you getting enough fibre? Join the debate over on [facebook.com/veggiemagazine](https://www.facebook.com/veggiemagazine)



**Lily Soutter, leading London nutritionist at [lilysoutternutrition.com](http://lilysoutternutrition.com), recommends eating breakfast, lunch and dinner, along with a snack...**

Right now, I seem to spend most of my money on healthy food and brunches at health cafés! For me, leading a healthy lifestyle is about fuelling my body so that I can perform and feel the best I possibly can. So, in order to do this, I eat three main meals, with a 3pm snack to keep me going. Here are a few of my top meal ideas for eating healthily throughout the day:

**1 Overnight Oats:** simply mix oats, chia seeds and milk together before drizzling over almond butter. Top with raspberries and seeds, and leave to soak overnight.

**2 Strawberry Smoothie:** just blend 150g fresh strawberries with 200ml milk, 150g Greek yoghurt, two tablespoons of chia seeds and one teaspoon of cinnamon together in a blender.

**3 Mediterranean Stuffed Peppers:** mix two tablespoons of sundried tomato pesto with a packet of Merchant Gourmet quinoa and 10-15 sliced black olives. Slice the top of

two bell peppers and de-seed them, then fill them with the quinoa mix. Top these with feta cheese and bake in the oven for 20 minutes or until golden.

**4 Low-sugar Peanut & Chia Balls:** mix 90g rolled oats, 150g peanut butter, two tablespoons of cacao powder, two tablespoons of honey and a tablespoon of chia seeds together in a bowl until fully combined. Roll the mix into equal-sized balls and store in the fridge ready for an easy snack! Preparation is key to ensure that you reach for something healthy and nutritious when the hunger pangs hit – stock up your store cupboard when you can, and enjoy a weekend of meal prep for a speedy, easy week ahead.