Eating Patterns

Meal Skipper

Meal Skippers have little structure when it comes to their eating routine. They don’t plan their meals because food is an afterthought. When they skip meals, they become starved and reach for anything editable, healthful or not. Based on observations of patients’ food recalls and logs from patients at Northwest Memorial Hospital’s Wellness Institute in Chicago, food intake differs each day depending on the Meal Skipper’s schedule, whereabouts, and to-do list. At the end of the day, Meal Skippers have no idea what they ate or how much, because they’re just not paying attention.

Nighttime Nibbler

Nighttime Nibblers find themselves eating most of their daily calories from dinnertime onward. The night eating habits causes them to awaken without a morning appetite, which leads them to go through the day without eating much; then they approach night time ravenous, and the cycle continues.

The Convenient Diner

Convenient Diners eat foods that are convenient, ready-made, packaged, frozen, and microwavable, with most foods in their diet bearing a brand name that is posted on the box or bag. Convenient Diners grab for the phone to dial for take-out more often than they grab a cookbook to make a fresh, homemade meal. They dine out at sit-down, buffet, or fast-casual restaurants and may even visit a fast-food drive through on most days of the week. Their diets consist of foods higher in fat, calories, and sodium and lower in fiber than foods cooked at home. When they do eat at home, their meal is most often ordered-in or microwaved.

Fruitless Feaster

Fruitless Feasters don’t eat enough fruits and vegetables, enjoying a diet mainly of proteins, bread, pastas, desserts, processed snacks and, of course, fats. They know they should be eating more fruits and vegetables than they do, but either they don’t purchase fruits and vegetables at all; they sometimes buy produce but end up having to toss it before they eat it; or they never learned to enjoy fruits or vegetables as part of their diet.
The Steady Snacker

Steady Snackers mindlessly snack throughout the day, whether hungry or not. Just the sight or smell of food or even a food commercial can trigger their compulsion to eat. This type of snacking is unplanned as Steady Snackers are often unaware of the extra food they’ve tasted while preparing a meal, cleaning the kitchen, sitting at a meeting, attending a social event, or standing in the checkout line.

The Hearty Portioner

Hearty Portioners eat too much food too fast and don’t know when to stop. They often eat past their point of fullness and have no idea what constitutes a healthful portion. They are often members of the “clean your plate club”, and because of this many suffer from indigestion and feeling sluggish after eating. Hearty Portioners stop eating either when they are uncomfortably full or there isn’t any more food on their plate.

The Swing Eater

Swing Eaters try to eat a strict diet of “good” foods but then they fall off the “wagon” and overeat the “bad” food. Their diet swings from one extreme to the other, leaving Swing Eaters never feeling satisfied. They deprive themselves of the foods they really want while in social situations and end up eating those “bad” food in private, which leaves them feeling guilty. Their vocabulary consist of good foods and bad foods, cheating and not cheating, restricting and overindulging.

Exercise Patterns

The Couch Champion

Couch Champions don’t like to exercise. When younger, many weren’t involved in sports and gym was their least favorite class. As they got older, they settled right into an inactive lifestyle in which most of their leisure time is spent doing sedentary activities like working at the computer, reading, watching television, or relaxing on the couch. Given the choice of taking a walk or reading a book and relaxing – the relaxing activity always wins.
The Uneasy Participant

Uneasy Participants are not comfortable exercising around others, which keeps them out of the gym. They compare themselves to others and think people will stare and see how out of shape they are. They are self-conscious about exercising in a group, are embarrassed about their body size, and fear further embarrassment if they sweat a lot or have trouble getting up off the floor.

The Fresh Starter

Fresh Starters don’t know how to start an exercise program. They may be uncomfortable being around exercise machines or weights because they don’t know how to use them. They’ve never really exercised but are willing to learn as long as they get the proper instruction.

The All-or-Nothing Doer

All-or-Nothing Doers are either “on” or “off” when it comes to exercise. They may be weekend warriors who, after a sedentary work week, spend hours pounding the pavement jogging or working out at the gym. Or maybe they join a health club and go faithfully 5 or 6 days per week for weeks on end, but then they’re unable to follow through on this unrealistic plan, and so they completely stop going and instead find themselves spending all their nights on the couch.

The Set-Routine Repeater

Set-Routine Repeaters are used to doing a fixed exercise routine, but that also keeps their weight fixed. They have been exercising at a safe and comfortable pace without advancing their exercise routine or challenging their body in new ways. This may be the person who faithfully jumps on the treadmill every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and turns the speed up to 2.8 where she walks and talks on her cell phone for 30 minutes. Or it’s someone who fits in his 40-minute workout on the elliptical two times per week at the health club, which allows him time to read his fitness magazine but without ever considering the need to increase the duration, frequency, or intensity of his workout; try other aerobic machines; or add a resistance-training component.
**The Tender Bender**

Tender Benders have an established medical condition or injury that impairs their ability to exercise. For example, a Tender Bender may have bad knees or a foot condition, a sore back or shoulder, arthritis and achy joints, or a heart condition. What Tender Benders share is that they don’t know how to adapt their exercise program to their particular condition or functional limitations, or they are uncertain which activity they can do safely.

**The Rain Check Athlete**

Rain Check Athletes want to exercise but can’t seem to find the time. They’re busy people who feel frustrated because they know they need to exercise and even want to exercise, but competing demands always take priority, “forcing” them to take another rain check.

**Coping Patterns**

**The Emotional Eater**

Instead of eating when hungry, Emotional Eaters turn to food for comfort when they’re lonely, anxious, stressed, or depressed. Food is their trusted friend who never talks back. Food is always there when they need it, but the truth is that food only makes them feel better temporarily because it never really solves their problems.

**The Self-Scrutinizer**

Self-Scrutinizers are their own worst enemy because they frequently engage in negative self talk. They feel ashamed of their bodies, which impairs their feelings of self-worth. Self-Scrutinizers think their self-worth is related to their weight on the scale of the image in the mirror, not who they are as a person or what they’ve accomplished in life. They have trouble separating their body image from their self-esteem, which affects their relationships, social skills, and day-to-day decision-making.

**The Persistent Procrastinator**

Persistent Procrastinators know the importance of losing weight and want to do so, but they somehow never seem to make it happen. Procrastinators may be anxious about starting a program and failing again, or they may feel overwhelmed and not know how to begin. They’re tired of saying they’ll get to it next week, but next week never seems to come.
The People Pleaser

People Pleasers are good-natured people who have a strong sense of responsibility and commitment to their family, work and volunteer causes. What's lacking, however, is their ability to take care of themselves and their own health at the same time. Because People Pleasers have trouble saying “no” to others, they end up putting everyone else’s needs before their own. This leaves them on their own “to do list.”

The Fast Pacer

Fast Pacers are experts at multitasking and juggling. They’re moving through life so fast that they really don’t have time to think about or plan how to live more healthfully and lose weight. Fast Pacers feel scattered and frazzled and have trouble relaxing; they know they need to slow down and put balance back into their lives but they’re not sure how to do so.

The Doubtful Dieter

Doubtful Dieters are pessimistic thinkers who feel hopeless about their ability to lose weight and keep it off- the typically say they have tried everything and nothing ever works. Doubtful Dieters have developed a self-defeating attitude that no one can help them and at the same time they feel powerless to change their negative thinking and behaviors. When life difficulties arise, they look at them as hurdles and barriers instead of challenges and opportunities.