



# The Natural Health and Fertility Centre

[www.naturalhealthfertility.com](http://www.naturalhealthfertility.com)

## A focus on meals: dinner

I am assuming that everyone has read the previous articles on breakfast, lunch, snacks and beverages. If not, please take the time to download a copy of the previous articles to familiarise yourself with the previous suggestions. If all other aspects of your diet are healthy, then dinner is really easy to modify and improve.

In today's busy society, dinner is often seen as the most important meal. It is the meal that we associate with socialising, family time, home cooked treats and enjoyment. Our society reasons that we can skip breakfast, grab something quickly for lunch and sit down and indulge in large meals and promptly go to bed afterwards. Going to sleep with a full belly is obviously not the best scenario!

If we have planned our day with our food intake and have eaten stabilising and nourishing meals and snacks, then dinner becomes less important. Some cultures and traditions even avoid eating after sunset to allow the body to restore from the day. Trial for a week and write down your dinners and your associated digestion (especially the next day) and sleep that night and see if you can correlate any patterns. Overall you may be surprised to find that what you thought you felt best from at night didn't really give you what you need. Always look at the rule which to work out if the food you eat gives energy or takes energy to digest. This simple rule helps us to understand that if we attune ourselves to our body's innate instincts that we will naturally choose foods that are better for us.

### Dinner strategies

Dinner should never be the largest meal unless you plan on doing a lot of activity after the meal. The purpose of dinner is to maintain your even blood sugar levels, provide nutrition to optimise sleep and restoration and to settle the nervous system and provide the nutrients to recover from the day. It is not meant to stuff our faces with the largest meal possible, consume copious courses of varying dishes and end it with lavish desserts that counteract the beneficial properties of the previous meals. I am not saying that dessert is an absolute no-no but that it shouldn't account for a portion of dinner on a daily basis and that we should choose our desserts carefully to select the best option individually.

### The plate rule

Use the plate rule when planning dinner:

- 1/2 plate vegetables
- 1/4 plate protein
- 1/4 plate starchy vegetables or carbohydrates
- Always some form of cold pressed oil



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## **Make the vegetable portion the bulk of your plate**

Encourage a variety of vegetables at dinner in a number of colours. As one of my younger patients eloquently put it, 'my plate should look like a rainbow'. Orange, green, yellow, red, purple... You get the picture. As a general rule, always identify the green part as the main vegetable (broccoli, bok choy, spinach, asparagus, choy sum, gai lan, broccolini, Brussel sprouts, beans, snap peas, snow peas etc) and surround it with the other vegies.

One tip is to remember to never overcook your vegies. Steamed vegies are best and other options are as salads, stir fried, in soups, stews or roasted. Avoid deep-frying or shallow frying and always avoid boiling.

## **Always identify the protein portion**

To enable you to digest your animal serve of protein properly, consider marinating it throughout the day and store in the fridge. One serve of animal protein per day is more than sufficient and vegetarians should always remember to protein combine (combine a pulse with a nut, seed or wholegrain to equal an animal protein in amino acids).

Carnivores should ensure that they don't waste the meat and only choose to eat high quality cuts. Cut off any visible excess fat and choose skinless options where possible. Fresh cuts are best and consider only buying small quantities to ensure freshness. A good tip is to buy your animal proteins once per week and individually freeze them and then take them out in the morning before dinner. It's a great way to plan ahead and always have the protein option covered.

Good sources include

- Eggs (organic) – such as a frittata
- Fresh fish – remember variety and include oily types (salmon, trout, mackerel) with white fish (snapper, john dory, whiting)
- Legumes or pulses
- Tofu or tempeh
- Chicken - lean breasts
- Lamb - back-straps or tenderloins
- Beef – eye fillet, scotch fillet, rump
- Kangaroo steaks
- Lean pork



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## **Don't forget some good fats**

Fats are an essential part of every meal. As you will be avoiding saturated fats as much as possible, remember to drizzle as needed. A good idea is to drizzle the oil on your steamed vegies in cold pressed oils such as olive, a squeeze of lemon juice and a handful of parsley – yum!

Other good options are:

- Cold water fish (good source of protein as well)
- Avocado
- Cold pressed oils such as olive or flaxseed oil
- Tahini (sesame spread) in dressing
- Sprinkling of nuts and seeds in salads or on vegetables

## **Reduce the carbohydrate portion**

People tend to over-consume the carbohydrate portion of dinner. Pasta in Italy is primi (entrée) not secondi (main meal)! If you choose to eat some carbohydrate at dinnertime, remember that your vegetables are carbohydrates and should take up at least 1/2 of your plate.

Good choices to choose from include:

- Legumes or pulses (lentils, chickpeas, adzuki beans etc)
- Quinoa, millet, amaranth, brown rice
- Wholegrain pasta

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For more about Leah, please see her page: [www.naturalhealthfertility.com/Leah.html](http://www.naturalhealthfertility.com/Leah.html)