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To keep your body in good shape, timing is everything

The Kathy Abascal anti-inflammatory diet should be a way of life, says Fit for Life columnist Nicole Tsong.

By [Nicole Tsong](#)

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AFTER ALL THE cleanses, nutrition challenges and diets I've sampled, my friends now text before I come over for dinner and ask, "What are you eating?"

As resigned as I am to being that person, what people should consider asking me instead is, "*When* are you eating?"

With all this cleansing and dieting and Paleo-ifying of what I eat, a few key things have stuck with me: My digestive system feels better when I take out grains, dairy and sugar. I rarely choose smoothies or juice. (Chew your food! With your mouth closed!)

I am most particular about the timing of my meals, especially how often I eat and when: breakfast within 30 minutes of waking up, dinner no later than two to three hours before bed, and food five times a day, max.

I learned about timing in the book “To Quiet Inflammation,” by Kathy Abascal. I did her anti-inflammatory diet more than a year ago, and her book is still my go-to for healthy eating. She can tout success stories from her method such as the disappearance of vertigo and diabetes, reduced arthritis and major weight loss. I like the medical research she relies on; it all makes sense.

Insulin is the basis for her rules on when to eat. Essentially, insulin is a dominant hormone in our system, and whenever we put something in our mouth, it triggers an insulin response. When we snack frequently during the day, including the milk in our coffee, mints or chewing gum, we are regulating our blood sugar instead of letting our liver do the job when insulin dies down. In turn, that affects how fat cells are stored and all kinds of communication in our body, including how well we sleep and the hormones our body uses to repair cells.

In order to get back on a healthy cycle, Abascal recommends eating within 20 minutes of waking up, and then eating four more times during the day. Snacks can be as big as you want, but no grazing in between.

She also recommends keeping meals relatively short (45 minutes at most for dinner) rather than dragging them out. If you see me dodging the appetizers until right before dinner, that’s why.

“As we start eating and tone down insulin reaction, one thing that tends to come back is an appetite for breakfast,” Abascal said.

Some people are the opposite, who say they are too busy to eat more than once or twice a day. Abascal tells them to carry an extra snack around, even something as simple as grapes. In addition to making it easy to fall prey to cravings, Abascal says not eating means we fail to fuel our body with the nutrients needed to cope with stress, toxins in our environment and other hazards.

Of course, when she says nutrients, Abascal means good fats and vegetables, and lots of the latter. Her eating plan is dominated by vegetables, some fruit and good fats, which help you stay full and sated longer. For more information on how to follow her diet, see .

I’ve done her diet twice, and every time am amazed at how quickly my body feels better and I shed a couple of extra pounds. I also have found that even if I slip back into indulging in sugar and wheat, if I still eat breakfast right away, eat four additional meals/snacks per day and don’t eat late, I still feel healthier and trimmer.

Abascal’s way of eating tends to attract an older clientele with health issues. I think it’s a way of life I will return to again and again.

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