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How to Avoid Late Night Munchies

By John Platano

Are you the victim of the late night munchies? Here's five helpful hints on how to avoid this dilemma.

1.) Plan ahead

When I ask people to record a three-day dietary history, not only do they have to write down the amounts and types of foods, but they must also record the times of day they ate their meals. This is when most people tend to screw up. Many eat in the morning and then lunch 4 to 5 hours later, but then won't eat supper until 7:00 or 8:00 o'clock. By then, they're so starved they stuff themselves. The pancreas then reacts by releasing a large amount of insulin to help absorb all the glucose from the food. We call this an "insulin spike." This is normal in fact, this is how the body reacts to food. But, now here's where the problems start:

If you go to sleep immediately after you eat, chances are most of the food will be stored as fat. If you stay up to watch your favorite late night TV show, you'll most likely feel hungry again. You see, after that big spike comes the big valley. Because of all the insulin released to absorb that heavy meal, your body's blood glucose levels have dropped again. Remember, insulin job is help the cell absorb the extra glucose in the blood. Glucose is also the primary fuel source for the brain. Therefore, when your brain senses a drop in insulin, you're hungry again. Oops, late night munchies, you pig out, go to bed and sleep more fat. So, plan ahead. Eat small meals at regular intervals, maybe every 2-4 hours is best. I tend to think of eating in terms of grazing. If I'm going to be more active that day, then I'll just graze larger portions. If you keep your meals at regular intervals you'll never be very hungry and chances are you won't be eating late at night.

2.) Eat small meals

Remember, digesting food has a thermogenic effect. In other words it takes energy to digest food that's why it's recommended to walk after a meal. In fact, they say you can burn off 20-25% of the calories you just ate by taking a 30 minute brisk walk after eating. Having small meals will provide your body with a steady supply of nutrients and the smaller amounts of food will not encourage fat storage.

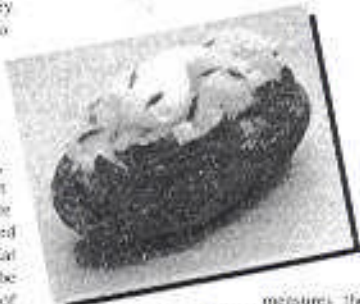
3.) Stay away from simple sugars

A list of simple sugars include glucose, fructose, galactose, sucrose, lactose and maltose. Sugars come from the macromineral carbohydrates. Carbohydrates are a major source of all body functions. Simple

sugars are found in table sugar, candy bars, twinkies, breakfast cereals, soft drinks and fat-free foods. Fructose is normally found in a variety of fruits, corn syrup or energy bars. Fruit is not as great a culprit because of the fibrous content of the skin. These simple sugars can initiate that "insulin spike" we spoke about earlier. Because of this spike, energy lifts, then a drop occurs which leads to another candy bar and another. This same "yo-yo" effect occurs with coffee, plus if you ingest a lot of sugar, you'll eat a lot less of something else that would have contained essential nutrients. Therefore, sugar can cause malnutrition by displacing nutrients in the diet.

4.) Eat complex carbohydrates

You're hungry and a bag of Doritos and a baked potato are in front of you. Which one do you go for? The baked potato, of course, but beware, the baked potato can also initiate that "insulin spike." How is that possible? Well, there is another grouping of carbohydrates called the "glycemic index." This



measures the rate at which carbohydrates are digested and its effect on blood sugar.

Foods that are high on the glycemic index are: Potatoes, carrots (cooked), honey, cornflakes, rice cakes, and soft drinks.

Foods that are moderate oranges, grapes, whole wheat pasta, rye bread, apples, sweet potatoes, and soft drinks.

The potato is definitely better than the Doritos because it is a complex carbohydrate or better known as a starch. Starches are large branched chains of glucose units connected together. That's why they yield so much more energy than simple carbohydrates.

Surprisingly enough, you would actually be better off spreading some olive oil, dressing or even a little butter on the potato to slow the absorption of the

carbohydrates. Which brings me to my last suggestion.

5.) Eat some fat

There are three categories of fats:

- **Saturated fat** - These are solid at room temperature. They are primarily from animal sources such as meats and dairy products. Vegetable oils, coconut, and palm are also saturated fats. Too much of these fats are bad for your heart and arteries.

- **Unsaturated Fat** - These fats are normally liquid at room temperature. The source of these fats come from plant sources, vegetables, nuts and seeds. There are two classifications of unsaturated fats: monounsaturated and polyunsaturated. Olive oil is an example of a monounsaturated fat.

The essential fatty acid, linoleic acid is an example of a polyunsaturated fat. Heart patients are advised to eat polyunsaturated fats, because it seems they reduce the risk of heart and artery disease. However, only one teaspoon of corn oil or safflower oil would be sufficient to supply the needed amount of essential fatty acids for an adult. The point is, these fats are preferred, but don't eat too much of them.

- **Hydrogenated oils** - This is a chemical process by which hydrogens are added to unsaturated fats or polyunsaturated fats in order to make them solid at room temperature and improve their "shelf life." However, a byproduct of this process is trans-fatty acids. These fatty acids are not made by the body's cells and are rare in foods. It is not clear that our bodies are equipped to deal with large quantities of trans-fatty acids. The presence of these unusual bodies might create some problems.



A certain amount of fat is essential in your diet. ACSM (American College of Sports Medicine) recommends up to 30% of any diet should come from fat. Fat is your largest energy source, helps to protect and insulate the nervous system and vital organs and assist in the absorption of vitamins A, D, E and K. Eating fat with your meal will help slow down the "insulin spike" which in turn maintains energy throughout the day. Fat does a lot for "taste" as well. Don't eliminate all fats from your diet. "A little poison won't kill" and in this case, fat might ironically, help save you from those late night munchies.

I hope these 5 points will help you combat the late night munchies. Good luck! 🍌

John Platano was the fitness coordinator for over 250 Personal Trainers in 30 health clubs. He sits on the board of Personal Training for IDEA and holds 15 certifications as a Personal Trainer. His company, Future Fit provides accredited continuing education and certifications for the fitness professional. For more information call 800-778-6666 or www.futurefit.net.

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Training with Carpal Tunnel

By John Platano

Several million Americans are affected by this disorder. **Lindy Loya MA**, an Occupational Therapist and a Certified Hand Specialist assured me Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) can usually be cured. *That's good to hear.*

The carpal tunnel is formed by the 8 carpal bones that include the hamate, trapezium, navicular, pisiform, trapezoid, capitate, scaphoid, lunate, and a ligament which spans the front of the wrist called the transverse carpal ligament. *Imagine the heel of your hand when it is cupped.*

Nine tendons and the median nerve pass through this tunnel. So as you can imagine, it could get a little crowded in there.

During wrist and finger movement these tendons and the median nerve must slide across each other.

Signs of Carpal Tunnel
In carpal tunnel syndrome, the median nerve gets compressed inside this tunnel. The first signs are loss of sensation in the

areas the median nerve innervates, after a specific activity or at night. A therapist will use a Phalen's test or Tinel's sign to help diagnose CTS.

CTS occurs in women more than men. It seems women generally have smaller wrists but not smaller tendons! This makes them more susceptible to this condition. There is also an increased prevalence during pregnancy when more fluids are retained, increasing pressure in the blood vessels that travel through the carpal tunnel impinging the median nerve even more.

Causes of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome
The most common cause of CTS is a cumulative trauma disorder caused by overuse or repetitive activities. However two other potential causes of CTS have been identified:

- changes in anatomical structures or
- underlying systemic or physiological disorders such as diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, or metabolic disorders.

The increase incidence of CTS in younger people involved in computer work or repetitive manual labor may be because of the increased awareness of this condition. CTS normally occurring bilaterally (both sides) could indicate some kind of systemic or physiological disorder.

Positions to avoid

Lindy told me that extreme wrist flexion can cause twice the amount of pressure against the median nerve while extreme extension can cause up to three times the amount of pressure!

Generally, avoid extreme flexion and extension. Do not apply force directly at the tunnel. Pushups or benching with a false grip would be out of the question. Unless of course, the pushups were performed on your fists.

If a doctor has diagnosed you or your client with CTS make sure to obtain a second opinion from a Certified Hand Specialist such as Lindy. As she warned me, "tendinitis can often be misdiagnosed as CTS and the nerve may be impinged in

many different areas as it travels down the arm."

How to exercise.
Having CTS doesn't mean you can't train. You just have to understand the condition and be a little creative.

It's kind of difficult to train you upper body without gripping forcefully, so why not bypass the whole joint?

Once the condition stabilizes and/or you've been given the permission to exercise, here are some suggestions:

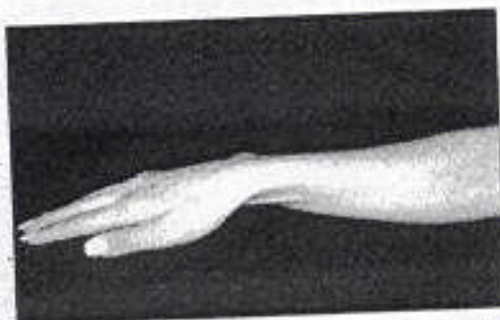
Buy some padded ankle cuffs that close with a ring instead of a belt buckle. Then go to Home Depot and buy two 24 inch pieces of seat belt material or safety cord. Attach these two pieces together in the middle with another large ring and place another ring on each of the two remaining loose ends. You'll have what looks like a big V, with a large ring in the middle and two smaller rings at each end.

In order to perform a seated lat pulldown without using your wrists, attach the two ankle cuffs to your biceps or just above the elbow, then attach the large middle ring from your V-strap to the hook on the pulldown cable (where the bar used to be) and the other ends of the straps to the left arm and the right arm. Now you can perform the pulldown without any strain on your wrists! Don't go up too far though, or the straps will start to roll up your arm.

To perform straight arm pulldowns, just stand up and keep everything where it is. Pull your arms from about shoulder height in front of you, down pass your sides. Again, don't let your arms go too high or the cuffs will roll off your arms.

To perform flat, incline dumbbell press or flies, move an adjustable bench in between the cable columns. Keep the ankle cuffs at the elbow or a little above the elbow. Grab the cables from above or below and attach them to the corresponding ankle cuffs.

For lateral raises you might be able to move the cuffs a little towards the forearm instead of the biceps. Just attach the bottom cable from the cable column and line up the specific fibers of the shoulder you want to work on. For front raises, stand with your back to the cable column and raise your arm in front of you. For middle delts, stand with the



cable stack to the side, bend at the waist, stabilize the spine and abduct the humerus letting the cable pass in front of you. For rear delts; stand with the cable stack at your side and attach the upper cable to the cuff around your elbow or a little above and horizontally abduct the cable as it passes right in front of you.

For biceps, attach the V-strap to the low cable and perform preacher curls facing the cable stack. The ankle cuff will have to go around your forearm and you won't be able to extend your arm all the way. The ROM will be shortened but at least the force of the weight won't be crossing your wrist.

If you can find some Power Block dumbbells to curl with, you'll be able to spread the force of the dumbbell over the forearm instead of just across the wrist.

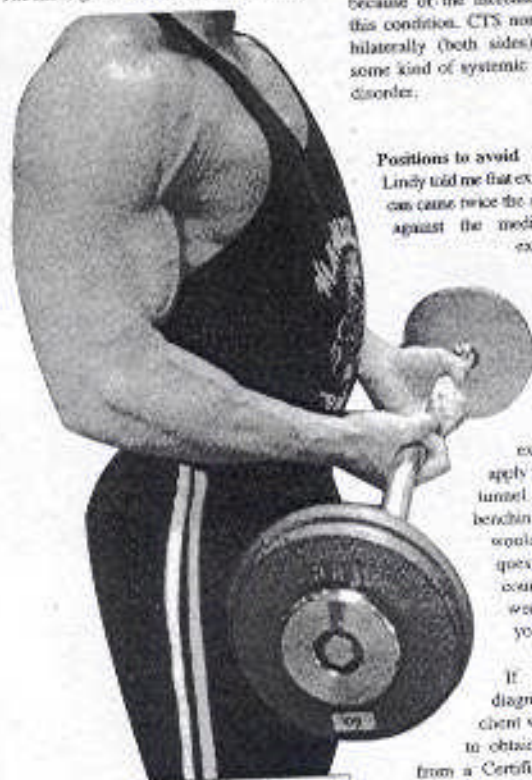
For triceps, lie down on a bench parallel to the cable column, attach the V-strap to the bottom cable and the ends to the ankle cuffs on your forearm and perform elbow extensions.

By now, I think you'll get the idea. I'm sure you'll be able to come up with some other ideas. Since Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is at the wrist, the goal is to not involve the wrist.

Remember if there is pain, stop the exercise. If the pain continues refer them to a doctor or a Hand Specialist.

If you interested in learning more, or if you suspect CTS in yourself or someone you know, see a doctor or hand specialist. Lindy Loya can be reached at 818-446-7027 ext. 120.

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Keep wrists straight when performing barbell curls and perhaps try an EZ-bar