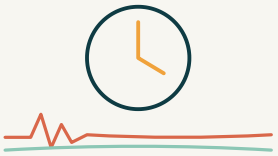
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Stress, Cravings & *Evening Eating*

Why stressful days end in the snack cupboard, and calm routines that help — breathing, the kitchen-closed ritual, planned snacks

GUIDE 11

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BEFORE YOU START

- This guide is educational. It is not medical advice and does not replace care from your own doctor.
- Erection problems can be an early sign of heart disease, diabetes or high blood pressure. Please book a checkup with your doctor.
- Get urgent care right away for chest pain, fainting, or an erection that lasts more than 4 hours.
- If you have heart disease or another health condition, ask your doctor before starting new exercise.
- **Diabetes medicines:** if you take medicine for diabetes (especially insulin or a sulfonylurea), changing how you eat or move can cause **low blood sugar**. Some people need a bedtime snack — ask your doctor before you change your evening routine, and never change a dose yourself.
- Not for people with type 1 diabetes or an eating disorder unless their care team is involved. If eating feels out of control, or you feel low or hopeless, please talk to your doctor. In a crisis, call or text 988.
- Never stop or change any medicine without your doctor.

CHAPTER 1

Why hard days end in the snack cupboard

It is 9:30 p.m. Dinner was fine. The day was not. Without really deciding, you are standing in front of the open cupboard with a bag of chips. This is one of the most common patterns men describe, and it has little to do with willpower.

Stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline get the body ready for action, partly by making more sugar available in the blood. Ongoing stress is linked with higher blood sugar, poorer sleep and more belly fat. Stress also changes what we want to eat: many people reach for sweet, salty, crunchy food in the evening, when the day's demands finally stop and tiredness makes self-control harder.

TRIGGER

The day's leftovers

Tension, boredom, a skipped lunch, or a long gap since dinner.

HABIT

The automatic snack

Eating in front of a screen, straight from the bag, often past fullness.

RESULT

A late, spiky curve

A late rise in blood sugar, heavier sleep and a tired, hungrier morning.

The plan in this guide works on all three: lower the stress load a little, change the setting, and replace the automatic snack with a planned one.

Check the daytime first. Skipped breakfast or lunch makes evening cravings far stronger. A protein breakfast and a Plate-rule lunch are often the most effective evening habit.

CHAPTER 2

Calm the system first: a 4-minute reset

Slow breathing with a longer out-breath is one of the simplest ways to signal the body to shift out of "alert" mode. Use it at the moment you get home, after a hard call, or when you notice yourself heading to the kitchen without being hungry.

THE 4-MINUTE RESET

MINUTE	WHAT TO DO
1	Sit or stand, feet flat. Drop your shoulders. Notice three things you can hear.
2	Breathe in through the nose for a count of 4, out slowly for a count of 6.
3	Keep the 4-in, 6-out rhythm. On each out-breath, loosen your jaw and hands.
4	Ask: "Am I hungry, or am I done with today?" Then choose your next step.

Other decompression tools

- A 10-minute walk after dinner — it helps the After-Meal Window and clears your head.
- A "work is closed" note: write tomorrow's first task, then close the laptop.
- A shower, a call with a friend, ten minutes of an easy hobby.

i **Note.** If stress, low mood or worry is with you most days, that deserves care of its own. Your doctor can help, and talking therapies work well for many men. Stress and mood are also common partners of erection problems, and both can be treated.

CHAPTER 3

The kitchen-closed ritual and planned snacks

Kitchen-closed is a time you choose — for example, 8:30 p.m. — after which the kitchen is done for the night. It is *not* a fasting plan and not about going to bed hungry. It is a clear line that saves you from making the same decision over and over each night.

The ritual, in four steps

1. Finish dinner with the Plate rule: vegetables and protein first, carbs last.
2. If you want one, have your **planned snack**, on a plate, at the table.
3. Do a small closing action: wipe the counter, start the dishwasher, turn off the kitchen light.
4. Make a cup of herbal tea or a glass of water and move to another room.

PLANNED EVENING SNACKS WITH A GENTLER CURVE

CRAVING	PLANNED SNACK IDEA
Sweet	Plain Greek yogurt with berries and a little cinnamon
Crunchy	A small handful of nuts, or air-popped popcorn (about 3 cups)
Salty	Cheese with cucumber slices, or a few olives
Something filling	An apple with a spoon of peanut butter
Something warm	A mug of warm milk or a small cup of vegetable soup

Change the setting. Keep chips and cookies out of sight or out of the house, put fruit and nuts at eye level, and avoid eating straight from the bag in front of a screen.

CHAPTER 4

Your evening plan

WORKSHEET

My kitchen-closed time:

My planned snack (if any):

My top two stress triggers, and what I will do instead:

If I take diabetes medicine — what my doctor said about evening snacks:

Evening checklist

- [ ] I ate breakfast and lunch today
- [ ] I did the 4-minute reset when I got home
- [ ] I walked for about 10 minutes after dinner
- [ ] I had my planned snack on a plate, or skipped it
- [ ] I closed the kitchen at my chosen time
- [ ] Screens off 30 minutes before bed

A tough night is not a failure. Tomorrow you start again with the next meal.

SOURCES

- American Psychological Association — stress and health
- National Institute of Mental Health — stress; finding help; 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- American Diabetes Association — stress and diabetes; Standards of Care (lifestyle and psychosocial care)
- Peer-reviewed reviews on chronic stress, eating behavior and blood-sugar regulation; studies on slow breathing

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