

## Two meals a day 'effective' to treat type 2 diabetes

Only eating breakfast and lunch may be more effective at managing type 2 diabetes than eating smaller, more regular meals, scientists say.

Researchers in Prague fed two groups of 27 people the same calorie diet spread over two or six meals a day. They found volunteers who ate two meals a day lost more weight than those who ate six, and their blood sugar dropped. Experts said the study supported "existing evidence" that fewer, larger meals were the way forward. Timing important?

Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body does not produce enough of the hormone insulin, which controls the amount of sugar in the blood, meaning blood sugar levels become too high. If untreated, it can lead to heart disease and stroke, nerve damage, light-sensitive eyes and kidney disease. About 2.9 million people in the UK are affected by diabetes, 90% of whom have the type 2 form of the disease. Current advice in the UK recommends three meals a day, with healthy snacks. Scientists at the Institute for Clinical and Experimental Medicine in Prague divided a group of 54 volunteers aged 30 to 70 with type 2 diabetes into two groups of 27 people. Volunteers were then given either a six-meal-a-day diet (A6) for 12 weeks followed by a two-meal day diet (B2), or vice versa. The study compared two meals with six meals - as the latter accorded with current practice advice in the Czech Republic, researchers said. Each diet contained on average 1,700 calories a day. 'Very pleasing' result The B2 group ate between 06:00 and 10:00 and then between 12:00 and 16:00, and the A6 group ate their food throughout the day. Weight loss for the B2 group averaged 1.4kg (3lb) more than A6, and they lost about 4cm (1.5in) more from their waistlines. Lead scientist Dr Hana Kahleova, at the Institute for Clinical and Experimental Medicine, said the results were "very pleasing". She said: "The patients were really afraid they would get hungry in the evening but feelings of hunger were lower as the patients ate until they were satisfied. "But when they ate six times a day the meals were not leaving them feeling satisfied. It was quite surprising." 'Larger studies needed' Dr Kahleova said the study could apply to people without diabetes who were trying to lose weight. Dr Richard Elliott, research communications officer at Diabetes UK, said the study added to evidence that eating fewer, larger meals a day could be more effective than smaller, frequent meals at helping people manage their condition. He added: "However, larger studies over longer periods of time will be needed to back up these findings before we would make changes to the dietary advice given to people with type 2 diabetes." Dr Elliot said eating a healthy, balanced diet, being active and maintaining a healthy weight, alongside taking any medication was "vital" to effectively manage the condition.