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Friends

In an interesting study on teenagers recently published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, researchers observed overweight and normal-weight teenagers and their snacking patterns when paired with overweight or normal-weight friends or strangers. When the overweight kids were paired with overweight friends, they ate more calories than any other combination of friends or strangers regardless of weight status. On the other hand, when overweight kids snacked with normal-weight strangers, they ate the least of all the scenarios and less than the normal-weight kids. While this study was small, it illustrates that kids respond to peer pressure when they eat.

The same probably holds true for us as well. If we're with strangers, especially if they weigh less than we do, we eat less. If we're with people we know and perceive our weight as comparable, we eat a lot more. So we should stop eating with friends, right?

Hold on. There was one more factor in the study. There was an unlimited amount of food available for each teenager. They could snack as much as they wanted but only from their own supply. The solution may be to simply limit the amount of food available. Whether you're alone or with friends, you can't eat what isn't there.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

Reference: Am J Clin Nutr 2009;90:282–7.

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