

HEALTHY SNACKING Nutrition News You Can Use



Learn how to snack smart for better health



Our dietitians receive hundreds of questions each year about a wide variety of nutrition topics. Their timely and trustworthy insights and ideas can help you and your family live healthier lives.

Are you a "smart snacker?" Smart snackers know which snacks are good for them, how much and how often they should snack, and how to enjoy the snacks they love as part of a healthy diet. If you're not a smart snacker today, don't worry — many of us aren't. But by making a few changes you can learn how to snack healthy and snack smart.

Land of the Snacker

America has gained a reputation as being a snacking nation. Studies show that we're snacking more than ever before. With our busy lifestyles and hectic schedules snacking helps us get through the day. But as we snack more it's more important than ever to snack smart. Learning how to be a smart snacker can help you feel less hungry and more energetic while maintaining, or reaching, a healthy weight.

SNACK SMART TIPS

Healthier Meals Lead to Healthier Snacking

Many people don't realize that eating healthy meals throughout the day is the most important way to avoid over snacking. People who skip meals get very hungry. When they get hungry they snack. And usually they snack on whatever is convenient, which can be very unhealthy. So whenever possible, don't skip meals. Also try to make your meals more satisfying by including foods like lean proteins, whole grains and vegetables. These foods are 'nutrient rich' and they help you to feel fuller longer, reducing those in between meal cravings that so often get the better of us.

Moderation is the Key

To maintain a healthy weight the average

moderately active women needs about 2,000 calories a day. The number is a little higher, about 2,500 calories for men. But a healthy breakfast, lunch and dinner can easily add up to more than 1,700 or 1,800 calories (and that's before any beverages). This obviously doesn't leave a lot of calories left over for snacks. So it's important to keep snack serving sizes under control. That's why experts recommend that you pre-portion your snacks in bags, or purchase single serve packages. This helps to avoid 'mindless munching.'

Go for the Good Stuff

Good snacks can be good for you and taste good. Try to choose snacks that contain lean protein (like low fat yogurt or string cheese), healthy fats (like peanut butter, sunflower seeds or almonds), and fiber (like whole grain pretzels or popcorn.)

Limit snacks that are high in sugar, salt and saturated fat. Keep cakes, cookies, pastries, candy, doughnuts or chips to a minimum. Choose healthier snacks like nuts, dried or fresh fruit, low fat cheese on whole wheat crackers or vegetable sticks and low fat dip.

Plan Ahead

Unplanned snacks are often the enemy of the smart snacker. Planning ahead has many advantages. People who plan their snacks are more likely to have a healthier choice on-hand. Snack planners also get in the habit of snacking around the same time every day. Having a regular snack time can help 'stabilize your routine' and prevent snack binges. A good routine can also help establish the habit of snacking on the



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same amount of food at the same time every day, a good way to avoid over snacking.

Have an Emergency Stash

Planning your snacks is a great idea, but the reality of life interferes with the best laid plans. So keep an 'emergency stash' of good-for-you snacks. Having a healthy back-up snack like a granola bar, a bag of nuts or a piece of fruit ready to go at a moments notice can help you snack smart, even when the unexpected takes over your day.

Calorie Bank

Many smart snackers actually put some calories in 'the bank.' Here's how the calorie bank works. If you usually have a 20 ounce soda with 240 calories during lunch, switch to bottled water or a diet soda for a change. Put the calories in 'the bank.' Use around 150 of these calories for a healthy mid-day snack. Use the rest for a late-morning piece of fruit. Same total calories, but by banking them for healthier snacks throughout the day you can snack smarter than ever. Try to bank calories from chips, candy, cookies, cakes or sweetened beverages to free up the calories you need for healthy snacking.

Kick the Habit

Experts point to a few behaviors or habits that trigger over snacking. By changing or eliminating these habits, smart snacking becomes much easier:

- Don't be a 'night snacker.' People who snack after dinner or in the middle of the night often over snack. Try to kick the habit if possible. If you still need your night snack, be sure to make healthier choices and keep serving sizes small.
- Don't snack from a big bag, box or bowl. Many studies show that we eat more when there's more food in front of us. So snack smarter by downsizing your package or

serving container.

- Keep temptation out of site and out of mind. Studies show that high fat, high calorie, and salty snacks are almost too good to resist. If they're close at hand, even the strong often succumb to temptation. Snack smarter by finding ways to remove temptation from your environment. Getting rid of the snacks you can't resist makes smart snacking much easier.

Know how to Indulge

Snacking smart doesn't have to mean depriving yourself. Many snackers can't even imagine cutting cookies, cakes, candy, chips and other less healthy snacks out of their diets.

If you are very self disciplined, it may be easy for you to just say no. But just saying no isn't the answer for many snackers. So smart snackers learn how to indulge without overindulging.

Here are some of their secrets:

- Smart snackers enjoy their favorite snacks, but only once or twice a week at most, not every day.
- Smart snackers balance frequent healthier snacks with the occasional indulgence.
- Smart snackers know which of their favorite snacks are higher in calories, fat or sodium. By being aware, they can be more careful about how much they eat.
- Smart snackers indulge in moderation, but they really enjoy and savor their occasional treats. By slowing down and enjoying them a little more, they learn how to eat less, without feeling deprived.

Find the smart snack tips that work for you. These ideas are just the start. Talk to your family or friends to find out what's worked for them. Be creative and come up with your own smart snack ideas. Learning how to snack smart is an important step on your road towards



Since everyone's health history and nutritional needs are so different, please make sure that you talk with your doctor and a registered dietitian to get advice about the diet and exercise plan that's right for you.