

Healthy Snack Choices

Is snacking good or bad for health?

According to a recent review from the British Nutrition Foundation Nutrition Bulletin (Miller et al., 2013), **the evidence is mixed for both sides.**

- If snacking is *added* to your regular meals *without compensation by greater energy expenditure* (i.e., physical activity), you will have a positive energy balance which may lead to weight gain
- However, most studies (but not all) have shown reductions in perceived hunger and appetite at the next meal with snacking (Allirot et al., 2013)



Bottom line: “Whether you practice the “three” or “six” meal daily dietary pattern, weight loss ultimately comes down to how much energy (or calories) is consumed as opposed to how often or how regularly one eats” (Parks & McCrory, 2005).



What happens when you do not snack?

Several hours without food will dramatically lower your blood sugar levels. Your body ends up burning the wrong fuel type (protein) and stores fat. This results in energy levels plummeting, and food cravings increasing which may contribute to weight gain.

Do you really need a snack?

Before you reach for a snack, make sure you're really hungry. Pay attention to your body's clues. Is it thirst or hunger? When you first feel the need to munch, grab a tall glass of water or cup of tea.

6 Things to look for in a snack (Medline Plus, 2012)

On the nutrition facts label, look at ...

1. **Portion size.** It's easy to eat more than this amount! Remember to refer back to this serving size when reading the label.
2. **Fat.** Watch out if more than half of the total calories are coming from fat. Look for low in saturated and trans fat.
3. **Sugar on ingredient list.** If sugar is first on the ingredient list, it's not a healthy snack. Watch for “corn syrup” or “high fructose corn syrup.”
4. **High in fiber and low in sugar.**
5. **Sodium.** If something is “low in fat” it may be compromised with higher sodium content.
6. **Total calories.** For a small snack, under 100 calories is a good guide. For a more substantial snack, 200-250 calories is a good cap.

Allirot, et al. (2013). An isocaloric increase of eating episodes in the morning contributes to decrease energy intake at lunch in lean men. *Physiology and Behavior*, 110, 169-178.

Medline Plus. (2012). Snacks for adults. Retrieved from <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/>

Miller, R., Benelam, B., Stanner, S.A., & Buttriss, J.L. Is snacking good or bad for health: An overview. *British Nutrition Foundation Nutrition Bulletin*, 38, 302-322.

Parks, E.J., & McCrory, M.A. (2005). When to eat and how often. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 81(1), 3-4.

What is a “Good Snack?”

A nutritionally balanced snack satisfies your hunger and helps you to achieve or maintain a healthy body weight by controlling your hunger and food intake at later meals. **Make sure it contains both fiber and protein** such as the examples below:



1 cup Chili or Lentil Soup

Flax and Raisin Bran Muffin

Smoothie: Blend ½ cup Berries, ¾ cup Greek Yogurt and 1 cup Milk, add 2 Tbsp of Chia

½ cup Bean and Quinoa Salad

Or, mix and match your own snacks by selecting one from each category:

Fiber choices

***Fiber** helps you feel full longer.

**1.5 Tbsp Chia Seeds

5 Triscuit Crackers (Low Sodium)

½ grapefruit or 1 orange

**1/3 cup Bran Buds

**Avocado (1/2)

**Apple/Pear (medium)

**4 Prunes (dried)

**Mixed raw Veggies (1 cup)

6” whole grain Tortilla

½ English Muffin (whole grain)

Food contains **5 grams of fiber or **more** per serving.

Protein choices

***Protein** helps optimize fullness when paired with a carbohydrate

**Greek Yogurt (100 grams)

Babybel Cheese or Cheese String

1 Tbsp low fat Nut Butter

**1 cup 1% Milk or 1 cup Soy Milk

**1.5 Tbsp Hemo Hearts

**¼ cup unsalted Almonds

**¼ cup unsalted Soy Nuts

**Hummus (3 Tbsp)

**Small can of tuna (water packed)

**1 hard boiled egg

Food contains **5 grams of protein or **more** per serving.

Snacks on the bus

- ❖ 1 energy bar (Clif, LARA, Kashi bars)
- ❖ ½ cup of almonds, pecans or pistachios (de-shelled), unsalted
- ❖ 1 can V8 100% vegetable juice, low sodium
- ❖ ½ cup trail mix, low sodium, low fat
- ❖ 1 part skim string cheese
- ❖ Banana
- ❖ Apple
- ❖ 1 cup plain popcorn
- ❖ 1 cup grape tomatoes
- ❖ 1 cup berries
- ❖ 1 cup sugar snap peas
- ❖ ½ peanut butter and low sugar jelly sandwich on whole grain bread



Snacks for your break (keep these in a cooler if possible)

- ❖ 15 baby carrots with 2 tbsp hummus
- ❖ 1 Greek yogurt cup (Oikos or Liberte) with granola
- ❖ 3 rye crackers with 1oz of low fat cheese
- ❖ 1 cup sliced sweet peppers with ¼ cup of guacamole dip or low fat salad dressing
- ❖ 1 hard boiled egg with a handful of grapes
- ❖ 1 string cheese with 1 cup of strawberries
- ❖ ½ cup of cottage cheese with ½ cup of pineapple chunks



Snacks for your home

- ❖ 1 cup smoothie with your favourite fruit, greens and Greek yogurt, cottage cheese or protein powder. Add flax or chia seeds.
- ❖ 1 slice of whole grain bread with ¼ cup of tuna or peanut butter.
- ❖ 1 cup of cereal with milk.
- ❖ ½ of a toasted English muffin with ¼ avocado and a slice of tomato.



Eat this	Not that
Air-popped popcorn with a drizzle of coconut oil	Buttered popcorn
Homemade fruit smoothies, water	Fruit juice, pop, sugary drinks
1 cookie with a piece of fruit	3 cookies
High-fiber, low-sugar cereal (Oatmeal, Kashi, Shreddies)	Low-fiber, high sugar cereal (Fruit Loops, Rice Krispies)
1 scoop of ice cream with a lot of fresh fruit	4 scoops of ice cream
Crunchy, low-sugar, high fiber granola bars	“Chewy”, high-sugar, low-fiber granola bars