

Snacking and Maintaining a Healthy Weight

When you're trying to lose weight, it's never a good idea to starve yourself. You need to eat every few hours, which will help keep cravings at bay, blood sugar stable, and your energy up. Otherwise, you risk getting too hungry and being just one doughnut (or whatever!) away from a slip.

A healthy snack does more than calm hunger pangs between meals—it boosts your energy and provides essential nutrients. And it chases away the fatigue, irritability and headache that often accompany low energy. Healthy snacking helps you maintain a healthy weight, because when you are less hungry, you tend to eat less at mealtime.

Did you know that eating burns calories? You need to eat in order to lose weight. Your body requires energy (calories) to break down food, absorb its nutrients, and rid itself of the waste products digestion creates. Frequent eating revs up your metabolism more often, but the quality of the food is important! So there is a place for snacking in a balanced diet, on the condition that you snack intelligently and choose nutritious foods.

Fruits and Vegetables don't require a lot of preparation and they're full of vitamins and nutrients. Fruits and vegetables also contain fiber and will help you feel full between meals. Avoid fruit juices, however, because the fiber has been removed and often additional sugars have been added.

Whole Grains contain a lot of nutrients that help make you healthy. They also contain fiber, which the body is unable to digest and helps you feel fuller.

Nuts and Seeds contain the healthy (unsaturated) fats your body needs. In addition, they are an excellent source of protein. As long as you consume them in moderation, nuts are a great healthy snack.

Dairy Products typically contain calcium and other nutrients, but also a lot of fat, so don't overdo it and choose lower-fat items. Cheese is more nutritious than many high fat snack foods and also prevents cavities. Chocolate milk has the same 15 essential nutrients as white milk and no more sugar than unsweetened orange juice.

DON'T keep high-calorie, high-fat favorites on hand, or it's too easy to give in. If you really want something, make yourself work for it. If you want ice cream, ride your bike to Skinny's and buy a baby cone.

If other people in your home or workplace have foods that are tempting to you, ask them to keep them in a different place. If they must be refrigerated, cover packages with foil, place within another opaque container, or hide at the back of the lowest shelf. "Out of sight, out of mind" is the goal.

Tips for Healthier Snacking

Don't snack mindlessly. Give your full attention to the food you're eating. Take time to enjoy its look, its smell, its texture, its flavor. Savor every bite and chew thoroughly.

Serve it in a bowl rather than eating directly from the container.

Pre-portion the snacks you prepare so you can grab and go. Use zip-top plastic baggies or reusable containers. Cut up fresh fruits and vegetables after you get home from the grocery store and put them in snack-size bags.

Ask yourself, "Am I truly hungry?" If you're angry, sad, or frustrated, deal directly with the issue. If you're bored, try one of these distractions:

- ✓ Brush your teeth (to freshen your mouth).
- ✓ Drink water (in case you're actually dehydrated).
- ✓ Go for a walk (and burn some calories).
- ✓ Work on your hobby (to occupy your hands).
- ✓ Chew sugarless gum (to occupy your mouth).
- ✓ Call a family member or email a friend (to occupy your mind).
- ✓ Write out your goals (and remember what's truly important to you).
- ✓ Paint your finger nails (and watch them dry).
- ✓ Go to bed (the later you stay up, the greater the risk of overindulging).
- ✓ Other ideas:
- ✓

Eat well-balanced meals and snacks during the day. Plan an evening snack a few hours before bedtime if your body seems to need it.

Remember that whatever you choose to eat and drink is nourishing every cell in your body which will affect how you function and feel. Sometimes we forget that we are eating for more than just our taste buds....

With information from

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