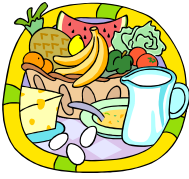


NUTRI-BYTES



Simple Strategies for Smart Snacking

Fresh strawberries dipped in low-fat yogurt...half a bagel spread with pizza sauce, low-fat mozzarella cheese, and vegetables...Did you know that eating small amounts of healthy foods, such as these, throughout the day can help control your weight? Studies have shown that persons who eat at least 4 small meals a day are less likely to be obese than those who eat three or less larger meals a day. When you spread out your calories in smaller amounts over the day, your blood insulin levels are more stable, helping to reduce the amount of fat stored and curbing your appetite so that you don't overeat at meals.

The word "snack" often conjures up images of chips and dip, cookies, candy, and soft drinks. The trick to controlling your weight and improving your diet is to choose *healthy* snacks, those foods that are not high in sugar, salt, fat, or calories. Smart snacking adds important vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals, and fiber to your diet and boosts your energy. Try these simple strategies for adding nutrient-dense snacks to your diet.

Choose snacks with little added sugar, salt, fat, and calories.

Instead of cookies, candy, or soft drinks, CHOOSE fresh fruits & vegetables, low-fat mozzarella "string" cheese, air-popped popcorn, small cans of 100% fruit or vegetable juice, or water. Check out the Nutrition Facts on food labels (look at the amount of nutrients per serving) to be sure that you are choosing foods without too much sugar, salt, fat, or calories.

Have healthy snacks ready to grab and go.

- Avoid eating from large snack bags (and eating more than you need). Place whole wheat crackers, pretzels, or nuts in individual plastic bags in small portions. Have fresh fruits and vegetables peeled, cut, and stored in baggies.
- Keep nonperishable healthy snacks, such as trail mix and high-fiber cereal, in the car and office so that you are not tempted to stop at the vending machine or local fast food chain for a calorie-laden snack.

Avoid boredom...choose a variety of tasty snacks.

Be creative and combine your favorite healthy foods for a delicious snack. You can make your own trail mix with unfrosted cereal squares and a small amount of nuts, seeds, and dried fruits. How about a pretzel with spicy mustard or low-fat cheese? Or baked tortilla chips with salsa? Or low-fat pita and hummus? Or a smoothie with fruit and low-fat milk or yogurt?

Remember...**PORTION CONTROL** is important for both snacks and meals. So choose and enjoy smart snacks in moderation. Listen to your internal cues for hunger and satiety and eat enough to satisfy your hunger, but not so much that you feel too full.

-Bonnie J. Brehm, PhD, RD