

The practice of snacking between meals has been blamed for “spoiling” children’s appetites and adding unwanted inches to adults’ waistlines. However, those problems come from unhealthy snacking habits.

Truth is, snacking can be healthy. The right snack at the right time will decrease your hunger, add missing nutrients to your diet, help you maintain a healthy blood sugar level, improve your mood and give you more energy. Most people notice these positive changes when they regularly eat something small (no more than 200 to 300 calories) every three to four hours.

Convenience and the availability of commercially packaged snack foods that are high in fat, sugar, preservatives and sodium are a barrier to healthy snacking. Most of the snack ideas listed below can be quickly and easily prepared at home. Not only are they healthier than most store-bought snacks, but they also taste great! Many of them can be prepared in advance and in large quantities, and are easy to grab and go.

Healthy Snacking Guidelines:

- Be aware of when and where kids do their after-school snacking.
- Offer snacks at regularly scheduled times.
- Do not let children snack in front of the television, computer or while on the telephone, because it’s more difficult to monitor portion sizes.
- Pre-portion snacks for your child or yourself into small plastic bags so they are ready to go when needed.
- Keep it simple. Eating healthy is easy to do.
- Combine foods that have carbohydrates and protein. Carbohydrates help brain functions and help maintain energy levels. Protein will keep you feeling satisfied for longer periods of time.

Carbohydrate-rich snacks

Protein-rich snacks

Fruits

Nonfat milk, yogurt, or cheese

Vegetables

Slice of extra-lean meat, fish, or chicken

Whole Grains

Beans or peas

Nuts or peanut butter

- Mix and match. Include one of each at snack time to help you achieve the mix of carbohydrates and protein and to make it more fun.
- Try not to choose highly processed foods, such as prepackaged cheese and crackers combinations, snack cakes, chips or candy bars.

Healthy Snacks

Snack Ideas

- Half of a toasted English muffin, topped with low-fat cream cheese or a sprinkle of mozzarella cheese.
- Freeze $\frac{1}{2}$ cup red and green grapes. Combine them with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of your favorite nuts.
- Baby carrots dipped in hummus.
- Half of a whole-wheat English muffin topped with 1 Tbsp. natural peanut butter and honey or jam.
- Non-fat or low-fat yogurt with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup blueberries.
- A sliced apple with a mozzarella cheese stick or string cheese.
- Drain a can of water packed tuna and spread over whole-wheat crackers.
- One whole grain toaster waffle topped with 2-3 Tbsp. yogurt.
- Spread 1 Tbsp. of natural peanut butter into a celery stick and decorate with raisins.
- One small box of raisins with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup nuts.

