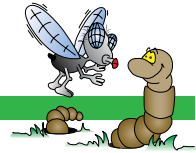


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FOUNDATION STRATEGY # 6 - CHOOSE HEALTHY SNACKS

Snacks are the unplanned “mini-meals” eaten between meals or in place of them. Although snacks are often eaten when you “get the munchies” or to give you an energy boost between meals, they are also eaten when you’re bored, stressed-out, watching TV or just “sitting around.”

Many different foods are eaten as snacks, especially those that are easy to grab, or prepare. The most popular snacks seem to be things like potato chips, candy bars, tortillas, nachos chips, cheese puffs, cookies, donuts, muffins, ready-to-eat cakes, popcorn and so on. These are often processed or ready-made foods. They are convenient and ready-to-eat. However, these kinds of snacks are also generally less healthy. Instead of these kinds of “instant” snacks, there are many healthier snacks that are just as quick or only take a short time to prepare.

All foods can be a part of healthy eating, even those so-called “junk” food snacks. They can be part of healthy eating as long as they are eaten in balance and moderation with other snacks and foods that are more nutritious. The main idea is to choose healthier snacks more often, and have the “junk” less often.

WHAT MAKES SOME KINDS OF SNACKS SO UNHEALTHY?

Many snack foods contain “empty calories.” In other words, these foods are “empty,” when it comes to nutrition. They provide extra calories and very few, if any, healthy nutrients. They are usually loaded up with too much fat, sugar, and/or salt. The extra fat and sugar provide all those empty calories. As well, many of these foods contain certain additives or chemicals to help keep the food from spoiling or to give it a certain taste, color or texture.

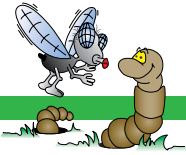
Besides this problem with empty calories, snacking can be unhealthy because of how and when snacks are eaten. Here are a few points to consider:

- Snacks and boredom - We all get bored once in a while. Sometimes, just to be doing something, you’ll reach for a snack and eat because when you do, suddenly you’re not bored anymore. In this case, you might not even be hungry – you’re just bored.
- Snacks and other activities- Activities such as watching TV, reading, talking on the phone or doing homework are often accompanied by a snack. You might have a snack to help occupy your hands while you’re concentrating on another activity. Sometimes, you’ll have a snack during these other activities simply because it’s a habit that you’ve learned. In many cases, you’re not really hungry – you don’t really need the food at that time.
- Snacking and stress - Stress, worry, anxiety...everyone has to deal with different stresses each day. When some people become stressed, they turn to food and eating as a way of calming themselves down or to feel comforted in some way, even though they aren’t hungry. Certain snacks become “comfort” food.

SO, HOW CAN YOU BECOME A HEALTHIER SNACKER?

There are several strategies you can begin to use right now to be a healthier snacker:

- 1) Make healthier choices when it comes to snacks and the meals you might prepare for yourself. Choose low-nutrition, “junk-food” snacks less often. You can still eat them – in moderation. Eat them less often and replace them with healthier choices.
- 2) Plan your snacks. Take a few minutes right now to think through your average day. You will probably discover that you have a snack at pretty much the same time every day. It’s a habit, in other words. The idea here is to plan ahead for those times each day, instead of just grabbing whatever food seems the easiest. There are many healthy snack foods that can be prepared ahead of time and there are lots of healthy choices that require little or no preparation.
- 3) Don’t skip meals – Eat breakfast, lunch and dinner (the “3 squares a day” as your grandparents would say). When you skip a meal, you might be very hungry come your usual snack time. This means you



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may be more likely to overeat or make choices that aren't as healthy. When you're really hungry, sometimes you just grab the first food you see – whatever is the fastest and easiest to prepare – which may not be a healthy choice. To avoid this, don't skip meals and then try to make up for it at snack times.

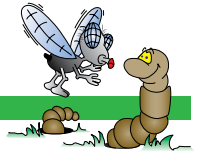
- 4) Communicate with your family – You may have to ask your family to re-stock your snack supply with healthier choices. Ask your parents to cut back on buying those unhealthier snacks just to “have in the house.”
- 5) Become aware of your snacking “cues” – Do you always eat in front of the TV? Do you always eat while you're doing homework? How about talking on the phone? Are these activities triggering you to eat, even when you're not hungry? If this sounds familiar, the first step to finding a solution is to become aware that you are even doing it. Once you are aware, then you can start to actually change your behavior. The next time you find yourself watching TV or doing some other activity, stop yourself before you reach for that snack and ask yourself if you're really hungry. If you really do feel like you need a snack, then make a healthy choice. However, if you discover that you aren't hungry and it's really just the activity that's triggering your feeling to eat, then you can begin to break that habit by becoming aware that you are even doing it.

Make a commitment to choose health. Choose healthy snacks.

HEALTHY SNACK IDEAS

- 1) Veggie snacks
 - Slice ‘em, dice ‘em, cut ‘em up raw - broccoli, carrots, cucumbers, celery, cauliflower, sweet red or green peppers or any other vegetable that looks good to you. Have your veggie snack with:
 - Cheese (a slice of cheddar or a low-fat cheese made from skim milk)
 - Peanut butter - or try almond butter for a change. It's delicious.
 - Low-fat cottage cheese
 - Milk – skim or 1%; have chocolate (1%M.F. only) for a change.
 - Hummus (a dip made from crushed up chick peas and sesame seeds); you can buy it already prepared in most supermarkets but you might have to ask where they keep it.
 - Low-fat salad dressings (make sure it has the words “low-fat” right on the label).
 - Low-fat salsa, low-fat sour cream or low-fat tzatziki.
- 2) Fresh fruit
 - Fresh fruit makes a great snack anytime or try dried fruit for a change – small amounts of raisins, dried cranberries (a.k.a. “craisins”), apricots, figs, dates, apples, pineapple, or papaya.
- 3) Nuts
 - Almonds, walnuts, peanuts (unsalted) and many other nuts are tasty and packed with nutrients – one serving is about 10 nuts and that's just about right.
- 4) Breads and cereals
 - a) Choose whole grain breads (like whole wheat, rye, oatmeal or pumpernickel). Try it plain or have it with:
 - A small amount of cheese or peanut butter.
 - Low-fat milk.
 - b) Try some whole-grain crackers, whole wheat pita bread, whole wheat English muffins, rye crisps, or some other whole grain bread product (remember to look for the word “whole” as the first word in the list of ingredients on the packaging – like “whole” wheat)
 - a) Cereal with low-fat milk
 - Choose cereals that are low in added sugar with less than 4-5 grams of sugar per serving.

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- 5) Yogurt
A small container (175grams) of plain or fruit-added yogurt makes a great snack. (1% M.F. or less).
- 6) Mexican tortillas
 - Put a soft tortilla shell in the microwave for a few seconds to soften it a bit and then roll it up with some shredded, low-fat cheese and maybe even a bit of salsa.
- 7) Popcorn (air-popped is best)
 - Toss it with a bit of shredded, low-fat cheese instead of butter and salt.
 - Low-fat microwaveable types are OK, too.
- 8) Hard-boiled eggs
 - Bet you didn't think of this one – hard boil some eggs – peel the shell off and leave 'em in the fridge. They make a great high-protein snack that's easy to grab anytime.
- 9) Fruit shakes or smoothies
 - Combine fruit and milk in the blender, along with a few ice cubes. Add a little honey or molasses for sweetening. Add some low-fat frozen yogurt to make a great shake!
- 10) "Trail" Mix
 - Make your own nutritious, ready-to-eat trail mix. Combine a couple of handfuls of nuts (for example, soya nuts, peanuts or almonds) with a handful of dried fruit (raisins, diced apricots or apples) and maybe some dried cereal or low-salt pretzels. It's crunchy and easy to eat "on the run."
- 11) Granola / Cereal bars
 - Look for brands that are low fat and made with whole grains. Read the label.
- 12) Soup and crackers
 - 1 cup of vegetable soup with 2-3 whole-grain crackers.