



### Healthy Snacking Tips

What image first comes to mind when you hear the word “snacks”? Chances are, it isn’t baby carrots or blueberries. Most of us tend to snack on convenient, fast, sugary or salty items like chips, cookies, crackers, cakes, etc. We are almost pre-programmed to think that “snack foods” must come straight out of a box. To illustrate the point, I guarantee you know precisely where the “snack food” aisle is in your local grocery store. And how do you know this? Is there a sign somewhere in the store that says “snack foods- aisle 7”? Nope, there usually isn’t. Even so, you probably would direct someone looking for snacks to the aisle that contains chips, crackers, cookies and candy. Ironic how they are all right there together, isn’t it? Next time you watch TV, notice the commercials about snack foods. How many times do you see a “snack” advertised that doesn’t come out of a box or a bag? The point of all this is we need to redefine our perspective of what a snack actually is.

Snacking on healthy, nutritious foods is a great way to balance out your daily diet. Eating small portions of nutrient rich foods can keep your metabolism humming along steadily as well as maintain normal blood sugar levels. Additionally, healthy snacking can prevent you from overeating at your next meal.

Here are a few tips I use when it comes to snacking:

**1. Skip the sweet snacks.**

You know the ones.. little mini-desserts if you will. These snacks may be advertised as “healthy” because of a low calorie count or because they are “all natural”- but, many of these are full of added sugars!

**2. Redefine your snack.**

Consider viewing the produce section of the grocery store as your personal snack aisle. Fruit and raw vegetables make outstanding snacks. They make you feel fuller without too many added calories and they contain vitamins, phytonutrients, fiber and minerals. If you find them too boring alone, they can be dressed up with healthy partners like natural peanut butter, low fat yogurt, hummus, low fat cottage cheese, or salsa.

**3. Do not eat directly from the container!**

There are a few healthy snack options that come pre-packaged. Do not think that just because something is “healthy”, that you can eat as much of it as you want. Portion out a single serving of your chosen snack and put the container away.



**4. Look for Less.**

If you do choose foods that are pre-packaged: Read the ingredients list! The less ingredients an item has- the closer it is to a whole (natural) food product. For example, natural peanut butter generally contains two ingredients: peanuts and salt. Now, check out the ingredient list on your next container of peanut butter- how many ingredients do you see?

**5. Pre-plan your snacks.**

The reason many of us choose pre-packaged snacks is because they are convenient and fast. Keep your kitchen stocked with healthy items that are ready to eat- such as fresh fruit, natural peanut butter, cottage cheese, yogurt, and mixed nuts. Purchase fresh produce, cut it up and place it into separate containers for easy access. This is one of the ways I began training myself to eat better! I would purchase fresh fruit and display it in a bowl on my kitchen counter. I had to look at it every day. Eventually, I grew tired of throwing away spoiled, uneaten fruit (money!) and vowed to eat whatever I placed in that bowl before choosing any other snack. It worked-today, very few of the fruits stick around long enough to spoil.

So, now that you know a few of my personal snacking rules- here are some suggestions for healthy snack items:

Apple with 1tbsp natural peanut butter

1 handful of unsalted almonds

¼ cup cottage cheese mixed with salsa

Raw, sliced red and yellow bell peppers with hummus

Whole wheat crackers with string cheese

Baby carrots and hummus

Cherry tomatoes

Assorted berries and greek yogurt (low fat)

Organic blue corn chips and salsa

Fresh or dried fruit

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