

Wellness Articles

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The Importance of Healthy Snacking

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle, especially in today's fast-paced world, can be a challenge. Busy schedules often lead to rushed meals and unhealthy eating habits.

Packing snacks is a great way to keep you energized and nourished throughout the day. Having a quick bite at work, home, school, or on-the-go can be an important addition to your daily eating habits. Ensuring you always have healthy snacks on hand may also prevent you from stopping at a convenience store or vending machine and purchasing a higher cost food which often is lower in nutritional value and hard on the budget.

FIVE REASONS TO SNACK!

Sustained energy levels – Choosing nutrient-dense snacks provides your body with the energy needed to function optimally throughout the day. Snacks rich in complex carbohydrates, fiber, and healthy fats release energy slowly, helping you maintain steady blood sugar levels and avoid energy crashes.

Nutrient Intake – Snacks are an excellent way to increase your daily intake of essential nutrients. Opting for snacks like fruits, vegetables, nuts, and whole grains provides your body with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants crucial for your overall health. These nutrient-rich snacks support your immune system, boost your metabolism, and aid in various bodily functions.

Improved Concentration – Healthy snacks can have a positive impact on cognitive performance. When the brain is fed with balanced snacks, focus and concentration are enhanced. Nutrient-dense snacks provide the brain with the necessary nutrients for optimal functioning, helping you stay alert and productive throughout the day.

Reduced Cravings – Packing healthy snacks can reduce unhealthy cravings for sugar, salt, and junk food. By eating nourishing snacks, you feel more satisfied for longer.

Convenient and cost-effective – Preparing snacks in advance ensures you always have healthy options readily available. This saves not only time but also money, compared to purchasing expensive and, often, unhealthy snacks on the go.

SNACK-MAKING TIPS AND IDEAS

To help make it easier to bring snacks from home, prepare in advance by following these simple tips:

- plan your week's snacks before heading to the grocery store and include them in your meal preparation

- think outside the box! Use a “bento box” filled with a variety of different snacks to keep things interesting.
- chop extra vegetables and fruit and have them ready in the fridge to grab-and-go
- make muffins ahead of time and store them in the freezer
- buy hummus when grocery shopping or make some at home
- hard boil eggs and keep them in the fridge with the shell on (they will keep for about a week)

If you have the option to store snacks at your workplace, here are some options that do not need refrigeration:

- apples, oranges, or canned fruit
- dry oatmeal
- canned tuna
- whole grain crackers
- nuts, pumpkin, or sunflower seeds

KIDS NEED SNACKS TOO!

While adults and teenagers benefit from eating snacks during their busy, activity-filled lives, it's also important for children to consume snacks. They have smaller stomachs than adults and teenagers and may have trouble eating the foods they need at mealtime. Food choices established in childhood often continue into adulthood, so building a healthy foundation is important.

ADD PROTIEN

To help satisfy hunger between meals protein provides a sustained release of energy, preventing blood sugar spikes and crashes. To help satisfy hunger between meals, snack on nuts and seeds or hummus and veggies. Pair one or two slices of cheese with a couple of whole grain crackers or cook some hard-boiled eggs for an easy protein-filled snack on the go.

HAPPY SNACKING!

For more snack ideas, check out this snack resource to help you to choose healthy snacks every day. Visit ahs.ca/nutritionhandouts and search for the handout called Snacks.