



## SMART SNACKING

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Everybody snacks, and most people could tell you what their favorite snack is without a thought. Snacks can be good for you, but many of us are guilty of nibbling mindlessly on junk food and that is detrimental to our health. Keep reading about healthy snack options and how to change your approach to snacking with a purpose.

### WHAT IS A “GOOD SNACK”?

Pre-packaged sweet and salty snacks are cheap and convenient, and we have all stomped to the vending machine in a hangry pinch! However, these ultra-processed snacks are made to sell you on a quick burst of flavor and provide no real nutrition. They are often sold in more than one serving, so you also consume a lot of calories without ever satisfying your hunger. Good snacks give you energy and nourish you through to your next meal. A generally recommended snack portion is 150-250 calories, and when you get those calories from the right foods, that is enough to satisfy hunger.

Medcor’s Guiding Health Principles include Eat Real Food which promotes eating healthy and nutritious food that comes from the earth. Your favorite flavorful snack can trigger a strong response in your brain, but taste buds can also be trained to

crave new things. There are plenty of sweet and salty things you can enjoy that come from real food, so challenge yourself to try something new instead of falling back on your vending machine favorite.

### HEALTHY OPTIONS

Any fruit is a great snack that supplies you with quick energy from natural sugars. An apple with a tablespoon of peanut butter satisfies cravings for something crunchy and creamy without many calories. Vegetables fill you up with fiber, and a dip like hummus helps make them a tasty snack. A serving of whole grain crackers and a piece of string cheese gives you a little salt and fat. Nuts and seeds are also salty and provide healthy fats. Try snacking on dry cereal if you need carbohydrates. Healthy cereals fill you up with fiber and will be more satisfying than a bag of chips or pretzels that is mostly air!

Liquid calories can add up fast and do not satisfy hunger, so think about what you are drinking, too. Many people crave the sweet taste of sodas – they pair with salty snacks and give you a boost with sugar and caffeine, but they won't actually hydrate you, so drink water throughout the day and before meals. Teas and iced teas are also great alternatives because there are countless flavors and caffeinated options if you need a boost with your snack.

## **SNACKING STRATEGY**

Eating healthy and well-balanced meals cannot be overlooked when you think about how to snack better. Your meals should satisfy you for 3-4 hours, so if you are always craving snacks, you could be missing important nutrients, or you are not eating enough protein and fiber to fill you up at mealtimes.

Staying hydrated and drinking water first when

you think you feel hungry can help keep you from mindless snacking. Thirst and hunger affect the same part of the brain, so it is a similar message relaying that gets you craving something, and you have a snack when what you really need is hydration.

Keeping a food journal is a commitment to recording everything you eat in a day. If you are typically a mindless eater or big-time snacker, this might seem like a huge task. But even doing this for a short amount of time can help give you perspective on how much you are snacking and how well-balanced your meals are.

Plan ahead and think about snacks when making a grocery list. A healthy shopping trip gives you the best opportunity to eat well, so set yourself up for snacking success. Happy snacking!

### References

1. [The Science of Snacking | The Nutrition Source | Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#)
2. [Quarantine snacking fixer-upper - Harvard Health](#)
3. [The Neuroscience of Snacking | Psychology Today](#)
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