

Healthy eating

Snacking tips

Guidelines for snacking in a healthy, sensible way.

Snacks are important, as eating little and often is now recognised as the best way to keep your metabolism on an even keel and at the same time to regulate your blood sugar levels. But snacks do add to your daily calorie count so choose wisely.



Nuts

Nuts are packed full of protein and fibre, and are a rich source of vitamins E, B6 and folic acid. But they are also high in calories, so a small handful is enough to curb hunger pangs.

- Pick non-salted varieties to help you stay within the recommended maximum of six grams of salt a day.
- Nuts with lower fat levels are pistachios, cashews and almonds. Chestnuts contain the least amount of fat.
- Almonds are the richest in calcium, which helps keep your bones strong.

Low sugar or lower glycaemic index foods

The Glycemic Index ranks carbohydrate foods according to their effect on your blood glucose levels. Choosing low GI carbohydrates - the ones that produce only small fluctuations in our blood glucose and insulin levels - is important for managing energy levels and sustainable weight loss. It is also important to long-term health, reducing your risk of heart disease and diabetes.

Good low GI snack choices include:

- Soft dried apricots
- Fresh fruits
- Fruit bread or malt loaf
- A small piece of cheese with a cherry tomato

Converting to low GI foods

The basic technique for eating 'the low GI' way is simply a "this for that" approach - i.e., swapping high GI carbohydrates for low GI carbohydrates. Simple ideas:

- Use breakfast cereals based on oats, barley and bran
- Use breads with whole grains, stone-ground flour or sour dough
- Reduce the amount of potatoes you eat
- Enjoy all other types of fruit and vegetables
- Use Basmati rice
- Enjoy pasta, noodles
- Eat plenty of salad vegetables
- For more information see - <http://www.glycemicindex.com/> - they have a search database - put in a food and it will tell you what its GI ranking is.

Choose more fruits and vegetables

Choose a fruit or a vegetable as a snack to help get in your 'five a day'.

- Variety is important, so choose a rainbow of coloured fruits throughout the week to get the best mix of protective antioxidants, vitamins and minerals.
- Raw vegetable snacks are tasty ways to curb your hunger pangs. Make them into a treat by dipping them in hummus, cottage cheese or even olive oil.

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Snacking tips contd.

Choose healthier crisps and reduce your crisp intake

Try crisps made from other root vegetables such as beetroot and parsnip, which contain more fibre than traditional crisps. Going from one pack of crisps a day to a pack a week can save you a massive 56,000 calories and 3.5kg of fat a year.

Drink water not fizzy drinks

A single can of fizzy drink can contain as much as six teaspoons of added sugar; these are 'empty' calories that offer very little nutritional value. Fruit juices also contain sugar, but they come with a whole host of vitamins and minerals as well.

Take it easy on cereal bars

If you have a sweet tooth and think a cereal bar is a healthy choice, you may need to think again. Some cereal bars are loaded with added sugar, which can appear on the label as glucose, dextrose or glucose syrups. Look for bars where sugars appear after most of the other ingredients in the list. This will mean that only minimal amounts have been added.

Watch the biscuits

If you like your biscuits be careful, most biscuits are 50 calories each. Opt for plain wholegrain biscuits like oatcakes and digestives and try to keep to just one or two a day.

