

A HEALTHY HUNGER

Menu Plans



Snacking is an area of your life where you can either boost your nutrition, or sabotage your efforts. Here are some basic guidelines to help you navigate how and what to eat for the best healthy snacking.

Is Snacking a Good Thing?

When I was a kid, other than milk and cookies after school, snacking was frowned upon. My Mother would chide us about eating too much with the threat, "It will spoil your appetite!". Depending on your eating pattern and levels of daily exertion, snacking can be an integral and important part staying properly nourished.

After a strenuous workout a light snack is essential for rebuilding stressed tissues. If you are a powerhouse at your computer, or in meetings all day, your brain could benefit from a healthy boost too. But there are pitfalls that you can fall into.

The problem with snacking is they are often enjoyed on the run, away from home and jammed into our mouths somewhere between inhale and exhale. This is a fact of life that no one can deny, so it's important to prepare in advance so that when the hunger pangs hit you don't reach for junk foods and load up on empty calories.

The Definition of a Healthy Snack

The best way to think of snacking is to treat it like a mini-meal. A good snack has some protein, complex carbohydrates and good fats. A snack in general should stay in the 100-300 calorie range, depending on your activity level. Try to rely on fruits and vegetables as your carb source, and veer away from processed foods. If whole wheat chips or pretzels are what's available, try and pair them with some type of protein, such as cheese or nut butters, to get those fats and proteins.

Beware of calorie bombs. Smoothies, green and otherwise, have become increasingly popular. I think they are great, but I shudder when see what some people are sipping. Smoothies are not "free food". They can contain an enormous amount of calories and sugars. A smoothie should be approximately 8-12oz in size to fall into the recommended calorie range. Also beware of the base used in that drink. Sorbets and fruit juices can add a lot of sugar, which not only raises the calories, but can blast your blood sugar levels. Try a nut milk or yogurt as the base to add some protein and calcium.

Portion control is also important to be mindful of. Snacking is often mindless (not a good thing). How many of us are guilty of ploughing through an entire bag of chips? So to avoid sabotaging dieting efforts, measure out or take care of your portion size.

Post Workout Snacks

Refueling after an arduous workout is great for recovery and rebuilding. A 45 minute yoga class would not fall into this category however. I will be doing a post specifically about this subject, but for the moment, use this guideline. If you are working out longer than an hour and a half, and/or burning more than 700 calories during a session, refueling is a must. Other than that (unless you've skipped the meal before), focus on hydration only.

Best Practices for Healthy Snacking

- The most obvious thing to do for healthy snacking is to prepare. Having easy to grab healthy choices will make all the differences in the world. Yes, this will take a little time, but a few minutes at the end or during meal prep is all you need. When doing your weekly shopping remember to add snacks to your list.
- Stock non perishable options in the locations where you are most likely to snack when you are away from home. Make space in your office drawer, in the glove box of your car, in your bag or gym bag.
- Prepare snacks into grab fast containers and place them in obvious places at home and in your fridge. Precut veggies in pretty containers right in front in the fridge will inspire you to eat healthier.
- Purchase fresh fruit every few days. Don't be tempted to buy massive amounts that fade and die before you get to them. A bright crisp apple is more nutritious and appealing than fruit that has sat on the counter for days.
- Whenever you can, slow down and enjoy your snack. I like to think of myself as a Genteel French woman who carves out lovely moments in her day to indulge and spoil herself. Taking a few extra moments to create a pretty plate and clear your mind and space to

enjoy it will add another beneficial layer of healthy living to your day.
A Few Healthy Snack Ideas:

- Shrimp with Salsa. Dice precooked shrimp and toss with a few tablespoons of your favorite salsa.
- Melon and Proscuitto with Cracked Pepper. Wrap 2 slices of proscuitto around some fat slices of melon and top with fresh cracked pepper.
- Chia Pudding. Add 3 tablespoons of chia seeds to 2/3 cup milk or nut milk with 1/3 cup greek yogurt and a drizzle of honey and let it sit for 15 minutes, stirring every couple of minutes. Add fresh fruits or nuts and enjoy. This may be made in advance.
- Avocado on Whole Grain Toast with Pine Nuts and Goat Cheese.
- Edamame Pods. I have a post on 3 wonderful ways to enjoy [Edamame](#).
- Pears and Blue Cheese with Olive oil and Salt. Thinly slice fresh pears, drizzle with a little olive oil and sea salt and top with blue cheese.