

FOOD ON THE MOVE

SNACK SMART

Snacking can be a part of a healthy diet – it can help keep us full in between meals and when on-the-move, give us that little extra energy boost. Providing we chose the right snacks, they can be an easy and useful contribution to your energy and nutrition needs, potentially adding extra fruit and veg, nutrients and fibre to our diets.

Hunger Cues

The key to snacking is to listen to your body – when hungry, a healthy snack can help stop your tummy from rumbling up until your next meal. However it's important to tune in to your body and understand whether you are experiencing hunger, or picking up on external cues such as your environment – think the plate of biscuits that's always topped up in the office kitchen – or social culture, such as subconsciously grabbing a cupcake with your mid-morning coffee because friends and colleagues have done the same. Could you just be thirsty?

Snacks might also be something you consume out of habit rather than out of hunger – do you clock-watch until 4pm every afternoon to be able to get your hands on your daily chocolate bar, or do you mindlessly pick up a packet of sweets every time you pay at the petrol station?

Once you've recognised whether your snacking habit is more mindless than mindful, consider the quality of your snacks.

Plan Ahead

It's a great idea to be prepared and have snacks with you when you are on-the-move to help avoid the temptation of filling up on calorie-dense, unhealthy options - hunger pangs can lure even the savviest, most health-conscious eater towards the doughnut stand! Service stations, airports and corner shops often cleverly display the high-energy, low-nutrient items by the entrance and tills as the first and last things you see.

Snacking Recommendations

A good snack should be one that satisfies your hunger and your taste buds. Depending on your individual activity levels and energy intake from your three main meals, the British Nutrition Foundation recommends that a snack should be around 150-250 calories, to help spread your energy requirement evenly throughout the day. A good snack can contribute to your minimum recommended 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day, as well as your fibre and protein intake.

Eggs – nutritional powerhouses, packed full of protein with healthy fats, B-vitamins, vitamin A and selenium. In fact, eggs contain small amounts of almost every vitamin and mineral that the human body needs. Try 2 boiled eggs with some chopped spinach, cherry tomatoes and some seeds for a great portable snack you can carry with you.

Nuts – ideal when on the move, nuts are nutritious and versatile – chose the unsalted varieties, mix together a handful sized selection of your favourites and serve with a small portion of raisins for a range of different vitamins and minerals. The healthy fats will help curb the hunger pangs until your next meal.

Veggies – an easy way of adding in a few extra portions of vegetables to your daily diet, cut up some of your favourite raw vegetables and enjoy with houmous or avocado dip. Extra fibre and extra nutrients included!

Dairy – rice cakes, wholemeal flatbreads or seeded breadsticks dipped into reduced-fat cottage or cream cheese, or cheese snacks such as Babybel are simple and versatile additions – with calcium, protein and fats. Have with a handful of grapes or cherry tomatoes for a well-balanced snack.

Watch the sugar

The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) published guidelines on sugar consumption that recommends adults should consume no more than 30g (about 7 sugar cubes) of “free”, added sugars per day. Free sugars includes refined table sugars, honey, syrups and unsweetened fruit juices, purees and pastes. One tablespoon of jam typically contains around 14g of sugar (4 cubes), while a regular Mars bar contains 33g (8 cubes), so it’s clear to see how easy it can be to quickly exceed the recommended daily maximum intake.

Read the labels on the back of the packet carefully, especially on products that might be marketed as “healthy snacks”, where manufacturers often cleverly hide sugar under different ingredient names such as sucrose, fructose, glucose or corn syrup.

Fruit

Whole fruits and milk-sugars (lactose) do not contribute to your Free Sugar intake, so if you fancy something sweet, consider adding a portion of fruit for some natural sweetness. Fruit is the ultimate on-the-go snack – chose your favourite seasonal fruit to enjoy and this will also count towards one of your 5-a-day!

- Plain Greek yoghurt with a handful of blueberries, strawberries and a sprinkling of flaked almonds
- Apple slices with 1 tablespoon of 100% nut butter
- Banana

Nutritious treats and smarter snacking throughout the day can help you stay fuller for longer and help add variety and flavour to your diet. Snack smart and eat outside of the box!

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