



The Balancing Act

Work/Life balance tips

Family Snack Smarts

It's two hours to dinner and that rumble in your belly is leading you to the snack cupboard. But before you reach for those deep fried or sugary treats remember that snacking doesn't have to be a guilty pleasure. In fact, eating small amounts of healthy food between meals can keep you energized, help your body get the nutrients it needs, stop you from overeating and even keep you trim. Whether you're eight, 38 or 80 snack attacks that follow Canada's Food Guide can be a smart step towards a healthier body and mind.

Childish Chow

Children and teens—with their active lifestyles and rapid growth and development—need extra calories and nutrients. Protein, calcium, fibre and iron are especially important. Pick snacks that give kids a healthy start like popcorn with added nuts, whole wheat crackers with cheese slices, homemade oatmeal raisin cookies (hint: cut the sugar by a third and use whole wheat flour), dried fruit or trail mix.

Plan ahead. Try stocking cupboards with easy options like low-sodium, high-fibre crackers and rice cakes. Cut up fruit and vegetables and store in containers with cold water so they're easy to grab and serve. Pair with a little low-fat yogurt for a flavour and calcium boost. By planning ahead and only keeping healthy choices around, you won't be tempted to serve less wholesome options.

Be sneaky. Find creative ways to boost the nutritional value of favourite snacks. Make mini-pizza snacks—using whole wheat pitas or English muffins, skip the fat-laden pepperoni and load them up with veggies your child likes. Make your own trail mix using nuts, seeds, dried fruit and whole grain cereal and opt for smoothies made with fruit, yogurt and unsweetened juice.

Walk the talk. You can't expect kids to savour a bowl of fruit while you wolf down chocolate cake, so set a good example. Snack well yourself and reserve less nutritious snack options (for you and your children) as occasional treats.

GROWN-UP GRAZING

As adulthood sets in and the metabolism begins to slow, you may be shocked to discover frequent unhealthy snack choices are beginning to take their toll on your body. If weight gain, overeating or high cholesterol sound familiar get back to basics: the four food groups.

Become whole again. Avoid repeated sugary snacks which lead you to crash and burn as blood sugar levels spike and then bottom out. Instead opt for whole grains and lean

proteins, which have true satiating power. Try whole wheat crackers or bread with peanut butter, baked tortilla chips and salsa, a handful of almonds or fresh fruit or vegetables with some skim milk cheese.

Make time. It can be easy to skip meals and snacks but depriving the body of food leads to low blood pressure and tricks your body into starvation mode slowing your metabolism and leading to weight gain. Keep carrots, celery or almonds in your bag for a quick pick-me-up when you feel your energy drop.

Eat when hungry. Whether it's a rumbling stomach, hunger pangs or low energy, listen to your body and learn its hunger cues to avoid overeating and poor food choices. And beware of confusing thirst for hunger. Since the brain can sometimes mix up these messages, drink plenty of water throughout the day.

MATURE MORSELS

As people age, lowered activity levels and a slowing metabolism can cause the body's response to food to change. Old food favourites may cause indigestion, leave you feeling downright ill or cause weight gain. Snacking can be an ideal option, helping to ensure you're getting vital nutrition to keep bones and muscles strong and energy up.

Less means more. Because you may eat less *what* you eat becomes that much more important. Snack on foods that provide the essential nutrients: low-fat yogurt or soya milk for a calcium boost; fortified whole grain cereal, figs, dried apricots or pumpkin seeds for a shot of iron; or a handful of almonds or walnuts for a daily dose of omega 3.

Fibre up. Grazing on whole grains—whole wheat crackers, toast and whole grain cereals— and raw fruits and vegetables such as carrots and celery, not only provide vital nutrients, but the roughage you need to avoid constipation (a common problem among older adults). Accompany with eight glasses of water daily to help keep things moving.

Get help. If mobility concerns are getting in the way of meal preparation or shopping, enlist family members' help, use a grocery store that delivers or look into programs that can deliver meals to your door.

Healthy snacking at any age is a great way to ensure your body gets what it needs to fend off illness and maintain wellness. Just be sure to use Canada's Food Guide as your start to snack smart.

Need more information on nutrition-related issues? Call to see if you are eligible for WS Nutrition Matters™. A Registered Dietitian can address any questions, help you create a healthy eating program and support you in achieving your nutritional goals. Call your EAP at 1.800.387.4765 for service in English or 1.800.361.5676 for service in French.

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