

A Nutritionist Explains: How to Snack to Boost Metabolism

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According to recent research, snacking has really increased over the past 30 years [[source](#)]. Around 50% of all eating occasions in the U.S. are snacks [[source](#)], which accounts for about one-third of all adult calorie consumption. That's a lot of snacks!

What constitutes a “good” snack is really up to you, but a definition I like to work with is a *small* amount of food eaten between meals. It should bridge the gap between full meals, fuel activities, and provide small bursts of energy.

Snacks to Boost Your Energy Metabolism





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Produce + Protein

When people ask me about healthy snacking, I always say a great goal to have in mind is produce + protein or healthy fats. The combination of produce and protein or fat tends to be satiating since the food will move through your digestive system at a moderate pace while keeping blood sugar levels stable.

Research studies have shown that protein, fiber, and whole grains are the most filling snack foods [[source](#)]. Healthy fats can be a balancing energy source; for example, almonds were shown in one study to regulate blood sugar levels later [[source](#)].

Reaching for a sugary snack or simple carbs, on the other hand, can cause your blood sugar to spike then crash, which will wreak havoc on both your appetite and your energy levels.

Keep it snack-sized

When reaching for a snack, be mindful that the purpose of the snack is to bridge to your next meal, not become a meal itself. While our bodies need fuel, we also benefit from giving ourselves a break from constant digestion.

With this in mind, when you're choosing snacks, go for snack-sized portions that will fill the hunger gap, yet ensure you'll still be hungry when the time comes for your next meal.

Pre-portion

So many snacking occasions happen when we're pressed for time, tired, and hungry, and we have a difficult time controlling both the type of snack (give me sugar!) and the portion size (ALL the sugar!).

One of the ways I work around this is to pre-portion snack foods into individual servings. For example, if you buy a big bag of nuts or are bulk shopping, take some time to pre-portion your snacks into single snack-sized servings in small jars or baggies.

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Snack mindfully

Before you grab a snack, stop and ask yourself why you're reaching for it in the first place [source]. Are you actually hungry? Or are you tired? Bored? Lonely? Sad? Having a craving?

I know I snack a lot at work when I'm really just looking for an excuse to get up from my desk. If the answer is anything other than true hunger, try replacing the snack with something else, like a quick walk around the block, some simple stretches, or a nice cup of tea.

If you've done those things and you *still* feel the need for a snack, then have one.

Fuel your day

If you're grabbing a snack between the office and your workout class, it should follow a different set of parameters than simply bridging the hunger gap between meals. For example, to get me through from lunch all the way to a late dinner and fuel an after-work swim, I often choose a much more energy-dense snack than I would otherwise. On the other hand, if I know I'm going straight home to dinner, I choose a lighter snack, so I'll still end up hungry for my evening meal.

Use a system

Here's a system I like to use when choosing my snacks: choose one snack-sized portion of a healthy whole-grain carb, one to two snack-sized portions of proteins and healthy fats, and one to two servings of veggies or fruit (this post details what a serving of produce looks like).

You can skip the wholegrain carbs if you're not in the mood or if you're not fueling a workout with your snack and simply stick to protein + produce.

Mix and Match

TO FIND THE PERFECT SNACK & BOOST YOUR METABOLISM

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WHOLEGRAIN CARBS Choose 0-1



A handful of wholegrain crackers



A small handful of pretzel sticks



3 brown rice cakes



1 piece wholegrain toast



1/2 a wholegrain pita



PROTEINS & HEALTHY FATS Choose 1-2



1/4 cup hummus



A small handful of nuts



1/4 cup cubed cheddar cheese



1 hardboiled egg



5 large olives

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES Choose 1-2



Carrot sticks



Cucumber slices



Celery sticks



Cauliflower florets



Red pepper slices



1 whole grain tortilla



1/2 cup leftover cooked quinoa



3 cups air-popped popcorn



1/2 cup whole grain cereal



One small whole grain muffin



1/2 cup of greek yogurt



1/2 cup of cottage cheese



2 Tbsp Peanut butter



1/2 an avocado



1/2 cup refried beans



Sliced apple



One banana



Kiwi fruit



Half a grapefruit



Fresh berries

Some favorite nutritionist-approved combinations include:



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This article was medically reviewed by Dr. Gina Jansheski, a licensed, board-certified physician who has been practicing for more than 20 years. Learn more about [Hello Glow's medical review board here](#). As always, this is not personal medical advice and we recommend that you talk with your doctor.

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