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Smart Snacking... **Are you Lacking?**

Is snacking healthy? I have heard that I should eat often during the day...but what does that mean and why? What should be in a healthy snack?

The Low Down on Snacking...

Snacking gives our body a consistent source of fuel. By eating every two to four hours, we keep our body's metabolism revved up and constantly burning calories. When our metabolism becomes lowered, it is harder to burn calories, making it more difficult to lose weight or even maintain weight. Eating at consistent intervals throughout the day also keeps us from becoming too hungry and then over-eating at the next meal or snack. It is also important to eat often so that our brain gets the proper amount of fuel to function optimally. This is especially important for children who are trying to learn in school, and then participate in after-school activities and homework. As adults we may not notice it as much but our concentration will suffer as well; and, of course, both children and adults often become irritable when going too long without food. Lastly, snacks help us reach our daily goals for fruits, vegetables, fiber, and other nutrients that we may not be able to get enough of from just 3 meals a day. Often for children and active individuals, snacking is also a way to meet calorie and/or protein needs.

What should be in a snack?...

An ideal snack should consist of a healthy carbohydrate that provides at least 3 grams of fiber (complex carbohydrate/whole-grain, fruit or vegetable), and protein or healthy fat. The calories for a snack will vary greatly depending on how long it will be until you are going to eat again, and a person's activity level, body size, and age. The average older child and adult should typically consume a snack of around 200 calories.

Examples of 200-calorie snacks

3 cups of Parmesan cheese popcorn

1 orange with 7 walnut halves

1/2 cup grapes with 1 stick of string cheese

1 peach with 8 ounces of low-fat yogurt

3/4 cup (1 packet) oatmeal with 1/2 cup blueberries

3 Tablespoons hummus with 1/2 sliced cucumber or 1/2 pepper

6 whole grain crackers with 2 tsp almond butter

1 apple with 3 tsp walnut butter

1 cup carrot sticks or baby carrots with 4 ounces plain greek yogurt mixed with salsa

1/2-3/4 cup whole grain cereal (less than 8 grams of sugar per serving) with 4 ounces milk

1 banana with 3 teaspoons almond butter

Smoothie- 1/4 cup juice, 1/2 banana, 1/4 cup berries, 2 ounces plain greek yogurt, 1 tablespoon chia seed fruit and nut bar

All-natural protein/energy bar

1/2 whole-grain bagel with tomato sauce and low-fat cheese

1/2 whole-grain pita with hummus

1/2 turkey sandwich on whole-grain bread with lettuce and tomato

1 tomato with 1/2 cup low-fat cottage cheese

1 hard-boiled egg with 1 pear

1 egg scrambled with 1 whole-grain slice toast

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