

# Plan snacks to boost health

Snacks boost energy between meals but need not be a so-called "snack food." Snacking isn't a license to overeat and shouldn't be considered the same as "grazing," which may involve multiple helpings from food available over an extended period of time.

Skipping a snack to trim calories and lose weight may not be as productive as choosing a health-promoting snack to satisfy hunger - and reduce the temptation to overeat at an upcoming meal.

\* Plan snacks, so as not to be caught empty-handed and with a limited selection.

\* Match a snack to activity level, which may require more calories. Active children and adults may benefit from graham or other whole-grain crackers and peanut butter or half a sandwich and fruit rather than a single apple or orange.

\* Vary snack choices, rather than choosing the same snack each day.

\* Look to locally grown seasonal fruits and vegetables for healthful, satisfying snacks.

While many consider fruits and vegetables the original convenience foods (because they come with their own wrapper-like peel), some preparation may make them more appealing as snacks.

Seeding and cubing and chilling a cantaloupe in a covered, clear glass or other see-through container can make such a snack more appealing, particularly when time is short.

\* In summer months, choose fruits (such as fresh berries, peaches or plums) and vegetables (cucumber, celery or summer squash) with a high water content to help replenish body fluids lost through perspiration and other body processes.

\* If a snack will be eaten away from home, choose foods that travel well.

Popcorn is an example. The low-cost, whole-grain snack can be pre-popped, seasoned to taste, and packaged in a re-sealable plastic bag. Its high volume also makes it a filling snack.

\* Consider leftovers, such as a single serving of a fruit, vegetable or pasta salad; half a meatloaf sandwich; or a slice of turkey, which all can qualify as a healthy, satisfying snack.

\* Choose dry cereal (that is not highly processed or sweetened) to eat like a snack mix.

\* Avoid soft drinks that may quench thirst but add calories with no nutritional value.

\* Drink water to replenish body fluids lost through perspiration and other body processes. Tap water is recommended.

Choosing to use a reusable/re-fillable water bottle can reduce environmental impact.

\* Choose beverages such as milk and 100 percent fruit or vegetable juices that offer health benefits to supplement snacks.

\* Pay attention to a standard portion or recommended serving size.



## Home Time

By Tranda Watts  
Multi-county Extension Agent

A one-cup serving of ready-to-eat cereal; one-fourth cup serving of dried fruit; one-half cup serving of fresh, canned or frozen fruit; or a two tablespoon serving of peanut butter count as one adult serving.

\* Buy snack foods (dried fruits, nuts or crackers) in bulk and repackage them as single snack servings, rather than buying more costly pre-packaged single servings.

Choose reusable serving containers for fresh or canned fruits, vegetables or leftovers.

\* Set up a snack station in the home by dedicating a cupboard or pantry shelf for storing non-perishable snack foods and space in the refrigerator for perishable foods. Posting a list of available snack foods in the kitchen also can be helpful for family members.

\* Popcorn is not recommended for children ages 2 and under because of a potential choking hazard. Choking can be a danger at any age.

Many everyday foods - a small bite of raw carrot or broccoli, peanut butter, or barbecue sandwich filling are examples - may pose a threat if eaten too quickly or not chewed before swallowing.

When snacking, take a break and make time to chew food completely before swallowing it to reduce the risk of choking.

More information on food, nutrition, health, and preparing health-promoting foods at home easily and economically is available at your local K-State Research and Extension office or by e-mailing [twatts@oznet.ksu.edu](mailto:twatts@oznet.ksu.edu).

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