Five Tips for Healthy Snacks by Patrick Pitt

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1) Balance Quality Carbohydrates with Lean Protein

Perhaps the biggest snacking mistake is eating carbs alone, unfortunately, this is quite an easy slip as carbs are a more likely snack options than are chicken breasts. However, the blood sugar crash that follows a carb-fest isnâ€™t much fun, or good for you. Luckily, this is easy to avoid. By combining lean protein with your healthy carbs â€“ youâ€™ll slow down the digestion process, which translates into longer lasting energy and satiety. Some examples include stirring a scoop of protein powder (I recommend soy) into your oatmeal or topping it with two tablespoons of crushed walnuts. You could also have yogurt or string cheese with your whole-wheat pretzels. Remember, carbs are not the enemy, just make sure to add protein to balance the snack equation.

2) Plan Portion Control

Look for single serve or â€œportion-ableâ€• Healthy snacks. One perfect example is the classic trail mix. This time-tested favorite has the added advantage of not requiring refrigeration, quite crucial for those who donâ€™t have time to plan ahead, or prepare more complicated fare. A classic Trail Mix answers to this tip quite perfectly. You can also make your own by selecting healthy soy nuts, seeds and dried fruit. For an added zing toss in some dark chocolate chips or candied ginger. This staple is perfect for busy moms because it will survive at the bottom of a purse or a diaper bag without suffering any damage for a week at a time, and can be doled out into individual sandwich bags days in advance. The high protein content, healthy fat, and fiber push this option to the top of the must have snack list, and the chocolate chips give it a kick which makes it seem as though it should belong on a "treats" sidebar. Another example of single-serve snacking would be to have a hard-boiled egg along with a fruit such as a banana (both beautifully portion-packaged by nature).

3) Make Fiber Your Friend

The beauty of Fiber it not what it provides, but rather what it sweeps away. A diet high in fiber ensures that your gut is clean and happy. It cleanses you daily and leaves you feeling fuller (for each gram of fiber we eat, we absorb 4 times that weight in water, which we quickly eliminate, but in the process feel much â€œfullerâ€•). In fact â€“ hereâ€™s a little secret: we all know there is no such thing magical weight loss tool, but fiber comes close! Each gram of insoluble fiber you ingest will sweep away about 6 calories. High fiber Healthy snacks are those that include complex carbs such as fruits, veggies and whole grains. Remembering tip #1, donâ€™t forget to add some protein! Examples include baby carrots with hummus, multigrain flax bread with almond butter, or mixed berries with Greek-style yogurt.

4) Choose All Natural or Organic Whenever You Can-

When choosing a snack, look for items that say â€œAll Natural,â€• or â€œOrganic.â€• As compared to conventional grocery store items, All Natural and Organic foods follow more strict guidelines regarding ingredients that can be harmful to your health. Organic food items follow the strictest guidelines and do not allow for ingredients that contain man made fertilizers, pesticides, growth hormones, or other chemical additives. When choosing what foods to put in your body, the better foods you put in, the better you will feel.

5) Donâ€™t Avoid Healthy Fats!

Fat does not make you fat. When you eat fat, your body must break it down into little building blocks and only then can it be absorbed. In other words the fat you have in your body is not the same as the fat you eat. Sugar and refined carbohydrates are far more likely culprits in the war against obesity.

Essential Fatty Acids(EFAâ€™s) are the types of fat that we need to eat, as our bodies cannot make them. Theyâ€™re responsible for ensuring that your body functions correctly and certain vitamins cannot be absorbed in their absence. Every cell in your body is partly made up of these essential fatty acids. Among other crucial tasks, we need them to breathe, make hormones, keep our hearts beating, run, and think. You wonâ€™t lose any body fat by excluding them, but you might lose your temper, as they also regulate our mood, and give us that satisfied â€œIâ€™m fullâ€• feeling when we snac course, itâ€™s the healthy fats weâ€™re after, such as those found in avocado, egg yolks, salmon, flax an other seeds, as well as nuts. Try scrambling one whole egg with three extra whites, and serving with half an avocado, stirring ground flax meal or almond butter into your oatmeal or yogurt, or snacking on soy nuts (edemameâ€™s nutty sister). Youâ€™ll be leaner for it!

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