

Taste

Snack attack

YOUR body is just like a car. It requires quality fuel and regular maintenance. If you eat only once or twice a day, your body won't perform well and will slow down, just like a car.

It will also start metabolising the protein it requires for growth and repair instead of using body fat.

Your body uses up the energy stores that help maintain normal blood sugar levels every four to six hours, so you need to fill up the tank. That's why snacking is important. Snacks give you an energy boost, help refuel your body and prevent you from overeating at mealtimes.

Most people look at snacking as something to be avoided because it's usually associated with eating foods that contain a lot of fat and sugar and many kilojoules. If you tend to snack on foods that are void of nutrients like potato chips, chocolate bars, buns and cakes, you're defeating the purpose. There's quite a difference between eating 250g of biscuits and 250g of apples!

You must also remember that a snack is a mini meal and not an opportunity to consume treats. With proper portions and healthy food choices, snacking can enhance, rather than damage, your diet.

Healthy snacks should add fibre and nutrients to your diet without unwanted kilojoules. Try to keep your snacks under 1000 kilojoules, keep portions small and try to allow 3-4 hours between meals and snacks. If you include some protein with your snacks, they'll help keep you feeling full for longer.

Make your snack choices a way of catching up on the food groups you might miss at ordinary mealtimes. Try to identify your weak areas. If you don't eat any fruit or vegetables at ordinary mealtimes, have something from that food group as a snack.

Keep healthy snacks in your briefcase, glovebox, office and home. Set aside a snack area in your refrigerator and keep it stocked with nutritious ready-to-eat snacks. Plan to take your own snacks with you so you're not forced to choose from a vending machine or a corner shop. Pack healthy food bags of ready-to-eat vegetables (like celery, cucumber, carrot, cauliflower, broccoli, capsicum, beans and cherry tomatoes), fresh fruit or a handful of nuts and dried fruits and you'll be getting extra fibre, vitamins and minerals, all for about 450 kilojoules.

Liquid snacks, such as fruit and vegetable juices or low-fat smoothies, are full of nutrition too. Even a skim milk hot chocolate drink offers beneficial nutrients such as iron and calcium.

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Handy snack suggestions:

- low-fat yoghurt
- low-fat cheese on wholegrain crispbread
- low-fat cheese with fruit
- a cup of vegetable soup
- a hard-boiled egg
- a handful of nuts
- hommos on wholemeal pitta bread
- low-fat yoghurt-based dip with vegetable sticks
- sliced fresh fruit
- rice cakes topped with low-fat cottage cheese and tomato slices
- low-fat muffin

Pitta chips

Preheat oven to 180C. Cut one large piece of wholemeal pitta bread into 12 wedges. Place pieces in a single layer on a baking tray lined with baking paper. Bake for 10 minutes.

French dip

- ¾ cup low-fat ricotta cheese**
- 2 tsp parmesan cheese**



WAY TO GO: Fruit makes a perfect snack.



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SANDY FRAZER

1 tbsp dried chives

3 tsp dried parsley

¼ tsp dried basil

¼ tsp dried marjoram

½ tsp garlic powder

pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Refrigerate to allow flavours to develop. Serve with vegetable sticks.

Lemon, date and pineapple muffins

1 cup self-raising flour

1 cup wholemeal self-raising flour

½ tsp ground cloves

½ cup sugar or Splenda

1 tbsp skim milk powder

16 dried dates, chopped

¼ tsp lemon essence

2 tbsp lemon juice

1 cup skim milk

2 egg whites

1 cup well-drained unsweetened pineapple pieces

Preheat oven to 180C. Sift flours and cloves into a mixing bowl. Add sugar or Splenda, milk powder and chopped dates. Combine remaining ingredients thoroughly and then add to flour mix. Stir through until just moistened — do not over-mix. Place spoonfuls into a non-stick 12-cup capacity muffin tray. Bake 25-30 minutes. Leave to cool in muffin pan for 5 minutes before gently loosening to remove. Makes 12.

Prune recipes

Prune and prosciutto rolls

150g prosciutto, sliced very thinly

250g pitted prunes

Toothpicks

Cut each prosciutto slice into quarters. Wrap a strip of prosciutto around each prune and secure with a toothpick. Makes 24 hors d'oeuvres. As an alternative, use bacon slices instead of prosciutto. Arrange wrapped prunes in a shallow pan and bake until bacon is crisp, about 10-15 minutes. An oldie but a goodie!

Warm prunes with pineapple, orange and kiwi fruit

500g soft pitted prunes, roughly chopped

150ml fresh orange juice

2 oranges, peeled free from pith and sliced and halved

150g fresh pineapple, cut into 2cm dice

3 kiwi fruit, peeled and each cut into sixths, lengthwise

2 tbsp honey

1 tsp vanilla essence or vanilla paste

1½ tsp cornflour

Place the cornflour in a small saucepan and gradually mix it to a paste with the orange juice. Add the honey then place on a medium heat and bring the mixture to the boil and stir and cook for two minutes. Stir in the vanilla. Choose a serving dish that will withstand the heat of the syrup and place the fruit in the bowl. Gently combine then cover with the syrup. Serve warm (serves six). The cornflour makes this into a slightly thickened sauce but it can be omitted and the juice honey and vanilla just be combined and heated then poured over the fruits. Vanilla yoghurt makes a pleasant topping for this healthy brunch dish or dessert.

Moroccan chicken and prune tagine

1 tbs olive oil

1 onion, thinly sliced

2 cloves garlic, chopped

2 tsp ground cumin

2 tsp ground coriander

1 tsp ground ginger

½ tsp black pepper

pinch of saffron

500g chicken thigh fillets, cut into chunks

400g can chopped tomatoes

grated rind and juice of 1 lemon

1½ cups chicken stock

2 potatoes, peeled and cut into large pieces

1 carrot, peeled and cut into large pieces

2 zucchini, cut into large pieces

250g pitted prunes

100g dried apricots

2 tbs chopped fresh coriander

COUSCOUS

1 cup couscous

1 cup boiling chicken stock

Heat oil in a large saucepan, add onion and cook on medium heat until golden. Stir in garlic and spices and cook for further 2 minutes. Add chicken, cook until browned, then add tomatoes, lemon juice and rind, stock, vegetables, prunes and apricots. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes, then simmer uncovered for 15 minutes or until sauce thickens. Stir through coriander. Pour hot stock over couscous, allow to stand for 10 minutes or until the liquid has absorbed. Fluff with a fork. Serve tagine on bed of couscous.