

HEALTHY LIVING

Nutrition Tips For Teens – Healthy Snacking

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Between school, homework, sports, and hanging out with friends, it may feel like there's no time for healthy eating. And when you do stop to eat, it's probably tempting to go the quick and easy route by grabbing a burger and fries, potato chips, or candy. But it is possible to treat yourself to a healthy snack. In fact, if you have a hectic schedule, it's even more important to eat healthy foods that give you the fuel you need to keep going. Even if you take time to eat three meals a day, you may still feel hungry at times.



What's the answer? Healthy snacks! Snacking on nutritious food can keep your blood sugar steady, your energy level high, and your mind alert – allowing you to feel and be your best!

Why Healthy Snacking Is Good for You

You may have noticed that you feel hungry a lot. This is natural — during adolescence, a person's body demands more nutrients to grow. Snacks are a terrific way to satisfy that hunger and get all the vitamins and nutrients your body needs. But you need to pay attention to what you eat. Taking down a large order of fries after class may give you a temporary boost, but a snack this high in trans-fat and empty calories will only slow you down in the long run. To keep energy levels going — and avoid unnecessary weight gain — steer clear of foods with lots of simple carbohydrates (sugars) like candy bars or soda or foods which contain a high amount of refined grains (like cereals, white bread products, fried chips, white crackers, cookies). Instead, look for foods that contain both healthy fats and proteins. Think buffalo jerky and a handful of almonds! Or a hard-boiled egg and 1-2 ounces of organic sharp cheddar cheese.

Smart Snacking Strategies

Here are some ways to make healthy snacking part of your everyday routine:

Prepare healthy snacks in advance. Did you know that you can make your own granola or trail mix? When you make something yourself, you get to control the ingredients and put in what's good for you! You can also keep plenty of fresh fruit and veggies at home so you can grab them on the go. Cut up melons or vegetables like celery and carrots in advance. Keep the servings in bags in the fridge, ready to grab and go.

Keep healthy snacks with you. Make it a habit to stash some fruit, whole-grain crackers, or baby carrots in your backpack or workout bag so you always have some healthy food nearby. Half a cheese or nut-butter sandwich on whole grain bread also makes a great snack to have on standby.

Make it interesting. Healthy snacking doesn't have to be boring as long as you give yourself a variety of choices. Whole-grain pretzels with spicy mustard, rice cakes with peanut butter and raisins, or fruit mixed with plain whole milk yogurt are healthy, tasty, and easy.

Ten Treats to Try

- Lara bars, Kind bars, or other all-natural, low sugar bar
- Cashews, almonds, pecans, pistachios
- Pumpkin seeds are a great alternative if you have a nut allergy or sensitivity
- Smoothies (blend all of your fresh or frozen fruits and veggies with almond milk or coconut milk and a pinch of cinnamon, then store in an insulated drink holder in your backpack to quench your thirst and your hunger later in the day!)
- Homemade trail mix including nuts, seeds, dried fruit, dark chocolate chips, and mini pretzels
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Garbanzo beans (try roasting them in the oven with sea salt and coconut oil for a savory, crunchy treat!)
- Cheese (preferably from grass-fed cows)
- Plain whole milk yogurt (preferably from grass-fed cows, and flavored with a little honey or maple syrup)
- Organic and/or local jerky (bison, grass-fed beef, turkey or elk jerky are all available in the health food stores around Denver)

Sara Peternell, MNT, is a nutrition therapist who works with clients primarily for fertility, pregnancy, and postpartum nutrition, as well as in the area of nutrition for young children. She is also an instructor at the Nutrition Therapy Institute. Sara, her husband, and their two children live in the West Highland neighborhood of Denver. More information about her practice can be found online at sarapeternell.com

Would you like to submit a recipe or write an article for the Healthy Living section? If so, email alison.bliss@n2pub.com.