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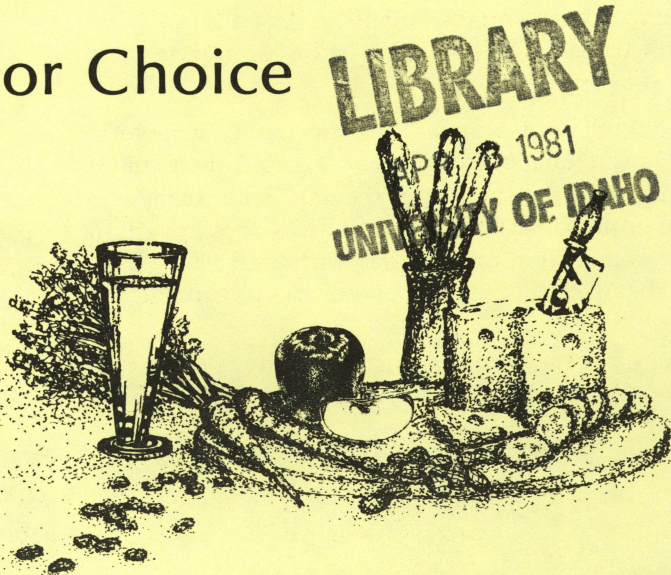
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SNACKS: Chance or Choice

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Snacking between meals has become the great American pastime. Most of us snack — at parties, at movies, with television, at coffee breaks or while working. Today, more food is eaten between meals than ever before.

In earlier times, a definite daily pattern of three, spaced meals was the norm. Long school and work habits helped mold this pattern. Now, many nutritionists suggest that only 80 percent of a person's average caloric intake comes from the traditional three meals per day; 20 percent comes from between meal snacks. The typical American adult has six to seven "food contacts" per day — three meals and four snacks. Children frequently have 10 or more food contacts daily; heavy snackers may have 40 or more food contacts per day. Surveys show teenagers spend half of their weekly allowance on food with much of it consumed between meals.

The danger is that many snacks supply only empty calories. If the snacks come too close to meals, they can crowd out nutritious foods served at mealtime. This can mean an expanding waistline and other signs of poor nutrition such as dull or lifeless hair, lack of pep and irritability.

Snacking, however, doesn't have to be all bad. Rather than avoiding snacks, use good judgment in planning and selecting them. Properly chosen snacks are an asset to your diet when counted as part of the day's total food consumption and when chosen for both nutrients and calories.

Choosing Snacks

You should select snacks that complement the other foods in your daily meal plan. Healthful eating means choosing foods from the fruit/vegetable, bread/

cereal, milk/cheese and meat/poultry/fish/beans food groups. A wise snack choice includes a snack from food groups that are not a part of your day's meals. For example, if your meals are lacking in foods from the milk/cheese group, a glass of milk, a wedge of cheddar cheese or some low-fat yogurt would be a good snack choice. If your meals are lacking in foods from the fruit/vegetable group but you regularly consume four to five glasses of milk daily as part of your meals, then an orange or an apple would be a better snack choice than a glass of milk. Limit your snack choices from the fats/sweet group.

Snacks can be an important part of a child's total nutritional intake. Frequently small stomachs need more than three meals per day. The snacks you offer your children should be considered part of their total daily nutrition.

Snacks should not be used as a reward for good behavior or to pacify hurts or bruises.

Snacks for young children should be easy to eat. When children are learning to feed themselves, offer them foods they can manage easily so they can experience the sense of "I did it myself."

Offer snacks with a variety of textures and colors. Young children frequently prefer familiar foods served in ways they can recognize instead of a variety of foods mixed together. As children grow up, let them enjoy helping select and prepare their own snacks.

Snacking is a way of life for many teenagers. Many teenagers skip breakfast and then snack haphazardly for the rest of the day. Since teenagers place importance on being well liked, they are apt to select snacks that are popular with their peers. This may mean candy bars and soft drinks or a nutritious pizza.

Teenagers tend to admire others who are physically fit and seem to have lots of energy. This

can be a positive influence for the athletically minded and help teenagers make wise snack choices.

Some teenagers are overly concerned with their weight — whether they need to be or not. Some are so afraid of becoming fat that they under eat and are poorly nourished, and yet they frequently snack and make poor choices. You can help your teenager make intelligent food choices by having nutritious snacks available when hunger strikes. Plan for snacks that satisfy a teenager's likes and nutritional needs.

Many teenage diets are low in vitamin A, calcium, iron and vitamin C. Good snack foods for vitamin A are dark green and deep yellow fruits and vegetables (winter squash, carrots, broccoli). Milk and dairy products (yogurt, cheese, ice cream) will provide calcium. Meats, eggs, prunes and most nuts are good sources of iron. Good snack foods for vitamin C are citrus fruits and juices (oranges, grapefruits, tangerines, cantaloupe, strawberries and tomatoes).



Snack sources for Vitamin A, Calcium, Iron and Vitamin C (Clockwise from upper left)



For the active, growing teenager who uses lots of calories, snacks that supply good nutrition and calories are fine. But for the teenager who is overweight or who shows a tendency to be so some day, it is more of a challenge to plan high nutrition, low calorie snacks.

Since snacks are usually eaten when there is little opportunity for follow-up toothbrushing, you should think about dental health when selecting snacks. Sweet and/or sticky foods and other foods that remain in the mouth for a long time can lead to dental problems. Caramels, hard candies and lollipops are particularly bad for teeth.

For dental health, some of the best snack choices from the four food groups are:

- from the fruit/vegetable group — all raw, fresh and unsweetened foods;
- from the bread/cereal group — popcorn;
- from the milk/cheese group — milk, cheese or plain yogurt;
- from the meat/poultry/fish/beans group — all meats, poultry, fish, nuts (not candy coated), toasted seeds and some peanut butters.

Good snacks are available that are nutritional and that won't harm dental health.

**Nutrition Information
(Per Serving)**

Serving size — 1 cup
Servings per container — 2

Calories100
Protein 10g
Carbohydrate..... 7g
Fat..... 4g

Percentage of U.S. Recommended
Daily Allowance (U.S. RDA)

Protein20	Riboflavin15
Vitamin A.....30	Niacin10
Vitamin C 25	Calcium2
Thiamine15	Iron0

**Nutrition Information
(Per Serving)**

Serving Size — 1 cup
Servings per container — 2

Calories400
Protein 15g
Carbohydrate..... 20g
Fat..... 28g

Percentage of U.S. Recommended
Daily Allowance (U.S. RDA)

Protein25	Riboflavin20
Vitamin A.....40	Niacin20
Vitamin C 80	Calcium35
Thiamine20	Iron2

Reading Labels

Labels on snack food items can be very helpful. Nutrition labeling can show you how much protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, calcium and iron are in a serving. Labeling can help you determine the number of calories in a serving of a particular item. You can then compare this calorie amount to the percentage of the United States Recommended Daily Allowance (U.S. RDA). A food item that provides 25 percent of the U.S. RDA for vitamin C and contains 100 calories has a higher nutrient density for vitamin C than another food which contains 80 percent of the U.S. RDA for vitamin C and contains 400 calories. This is true even though the second food has more vitamin C.

If the label only gives an ingredient listing, remember that ingredients are listed in order of predominance (the ingredient listed first is present in the largest amount and so on down the line). For

example, if sugar is listed before apples on a package of apple turnovers, it means there is more sugar than apples in the product. Homemade items are as nutritious as the ingredients used. A pineapple-carrot cake has more nutritional value than a chocolate cake.

Snacks can be expensive items in your food budget. Compare costs taking the nutritional value of food into account. For example, a 12-ounce can of a diet soft drink costs 30 cents and provides essentially no nutritional value. That is 30 cents for artificially flavored, colored, sweetened water. A 6-ounce can of vegetable juice also costs about 30 cents but supplies 35 calories, a large amount of vitamin C and vitamin A and smaller quantities of other vitamins and minerals. One pound of potatoes made into potato chips costs 10 times as much as fresh potatoes and contains far more salt and fat, two potentially undesirable dietary additions.

Snacking and Calories

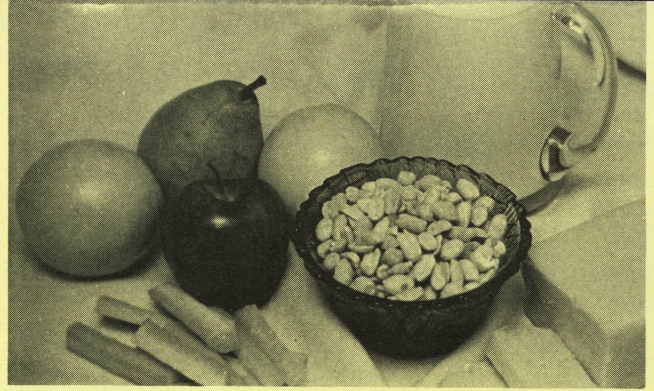
Empty calorie foods are high in calories but low in nutritional value. Some snacks in this category are soft drinks and candy bars which supply nothing or very little more than energy (calories). According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, snacks of "minimal nutritional value" are foods providing less than 5 percent of the U.S. RDA of protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, niacin, riboflavin, thiamine, calcium and iron per 100 calories or in each serving.

If you are trying to watch your weight, you don't have to eliminate snacks from your diet. Just remember to plan snacks as part of your daily total of allotted calories. You might want to save a portion of your meal for a later snack. When your total caloric allotment is small, be sure to choose foods with higher nutrient densities — more nutrients for fewer calories. Foods are likely to be relatively low in calories if they are:

- thin and watery, such as vegetable juice or tomato juice;
- crisp, but not greasy-crisp, such as radishes, celery, green pepper, carrots, melons, apples and many other fresh fruits and vegetables;
- bulky, such as salad greens and sprouts.

Foods are likely to be relatively high in calories if they are:

- greasy-crisp or oily, such as fried foods, butter and margarine;
- smooth and thick, such as rich sauces, cream cheese, peanut butter and cream;
- sweet and gooey, such as candy, regular soft drinks, rich baked goods and other desserts;
- alcohol-containing, such as beer, wine and mixed drinks.



Nutritious snack choices.

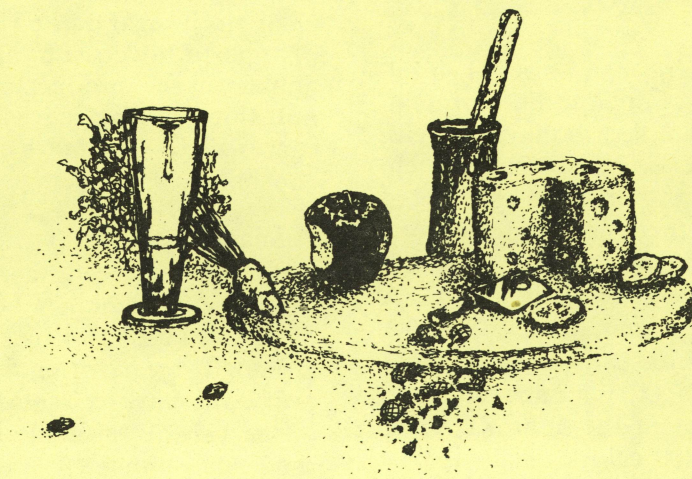
Planning Ahead

Advertising on television, radio and in magazines constantly encourages you and your family to eat snack foods high in sugar, salt and calories. It's easier to cope with this constant urging if you have a snacking plan.

Cut down on candy, soft drinks and other foods with high sugar, high salt and high fat content. Make better use of fresh vegetables, fruits and low-fat dairy products in snacks. A low calorie, raw vegetable snack before meals can even help you eat less during meals.

Have some nutritious "impulse snacks" available. If you get hungry, you can then truly make your snack a choice, not a chance. Keep some of the following snack suggestions on hand for making your snacks a "choice:"

- fresh fruits;
- dry roasted unsalted nuts, soybeans and sunflower seeds;
- raisins, dates and prunes;
- vegetable or fruit juices;
- yogurt, milk and cheese;
- whole grain crackers and bread sticks;
- carrot, cucumber and celery sticks.



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