

BALANCED EATING:

GREAT SNACKS ON THE GO

It's 3.30pm and you're starting to feel sleepy. It's getting harder to concentrate and you can't stop thinking about the contents of the vending machine in the next room. But you don't want to blow all the energy you burned in your early morning workout with an unhealthy snack. So what do you do? You are hungry and don't know how you are going to make it through to dinner.

Sound familiar? You're probably suffering from '3.30itis', the slump in energy and uncontrollable craving for all things sugary sweet and laden with fat. It happens sometime between lunch and dinner, and it's probably why the British began the ritual of 'High Tea' hundreds of years ago.

There has been a lot of contention over the years about how much and how often we should eat.

Grab a balanced snack for longer lasting energy

- ✦ A tub of low fat yoghurt
- ✦ Apple with a chunk of cheese.
- ✦ Nuts with a piece of fruit
- ✦ Carrot sticks and hommus
- ✦ Boiled egg
- ✦ Prawn and vegetable rice paper rolls
- ✦ Wholegrain crisp bread with avocado and tomato, or add a slice of cheese.



Low fat yoghurt is high in calcium and a source of protein, making it ideal for dipping fruit or mixing with fruits, cereals and nuts.

Matt O'Neill's Nutty Snack Ideas

- ✦ Make your own nut and seed mix so it tastes just right.
- ✦ Trail mix with fruit adds a little sweetness.
- ✦ For a treat try crushed walnuts, ricotta/philly cheese and apple slices.
- ✦ Ground up nuts and add to a smoothie.
- ✦ Make your favourite brew of nuts and seeds.

Healthy Snacks on the Go

- ✦ Nuts, seeds, or trail mix.
- ✦ Unsweetened low fat yoghurt.
- ✦ A glass of low fat milk or as a fruit smoothie.
- ✦ Fresh fruit, an apple or a banana are easy on the run.
- ✦ Dried fruit (try goji berries or cranberries if other dried fruits are too sweet).

Tips for healthy snacking

- ✦ Check the label on all low fat products as they can be high in sugar and kilojoules.
- ✦ 'Baked not fried' does not necessarily mean low fat.
- ✦ Products claiming '99% fat free' may still be packed with kilojoules.
- ✦ Read labels carefully. Check not only fat, sugar and salt content, but kilojoules per serving.



> Pack a container of mixed berries (strawberries, raspberries, blueberries), frozen or fresh as they are full of antioxidants and vitamins.

Some experts suggest eating six small meals a day rather than three large meals; however, it depends on the individual.

Dietitian Joanna McMillan-Price (www.joannamcmillanprice.com) explains that 'your body expends more kilojoules digesting and metabolising several small meals than the same amount of foods in fewer larger meals. It also helps to prevent you getting overly hungry when you are likely to overeat.'

However she continues to say that 'I am not a fan of the six small meals a day approach. From a practical perspective it doesn't work and means you have to be thinking about food every couple of hours. I want to direct my client's attention away from food and to eat in response to true hunger; hence, I go for three meals a day with a couple of snacks in between.'

Snacking is important for refuelling the body in between meals; however, when we're at work or on the go we tend to choose something quick and convenient. Unfortunately these foods tend to be high in fats, sugar and kilojoules, but low in nutrients, and for someone trying to be healthy or lose weight the 'snack attack' can be a nightmare!

Unsure whether your snack is healthy or not? If you are reading a label on an item that has more numbers rather than worded ingredients, then you are probably better off putting it back on the shelf.

Joanna says 'your best bet is to consume foods closest to the way they are in nature, such as fresh fruit, nuts, seeds and natural

yoghurt. They will always beat a processed or manufactured snack.'

Joanna suggests 'preparing your own snacks from real food whenever possible' and says to 'eat whole fruit over products made with 'real fruit'.'

Nutritionist Matt O'Neill (www.smartshape.com.au) is a fan of nuts when it comes to snacking. He says that almonds are the highest protein nut, which means it's a great snack for curbing hunger, and all you need is a small handful (about 30g).

'Compared with snacks like processed breakfast bars, nuts are likely to keep you satisfied longer' he explains. 'They are nature's vitamin pills packed with many nutritional goodies, such as protein, iron, selenium, fibre and healthy fatty acids.'

It's not all doom and gloom. Being 'snack savvy' is all about being prepared and choosing nutrient-dense snacks that will keep you going until dinner time. Staying satisfied means eating a snack that has both protein and carbohydrate; protein for satiety and carbohydrates to fuel the brain. Add some good fats and/or high fibre foods and you're going to have enough energy to climb Mt Everest before your next meal.

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Joanna McMillan-Price's 10 Top Tips for Healthy Snacking

- ✦ Don't be fooled by fancy marketing, as packaged snacks are not always as healthy as they say they are.
- ✦ Make sure you recognise the ingredients on the package and they don't sound as though they were formulated in a laboratory.
- ✦ Consume foods closest to the way they are in nature (i.e., fresh fruit rather than a processed alternative).
- ✦ Avoid constantly thinking about food and aim for three meals and two snacks a day.
- ✦ Always carry healthy snacks with you when out and about.
- ✦ Eat in response to physical hunger and only have a snack if it is at least two hours until your next meal.
- ✦ Don't be too generous when it comes to quantity. They are called snacks for a reason.
- ✦ Combine low GI (slow release) carbohydrates with protein to keep your hunger and energy levels more balanced (e.g., apple with chunk of cheese).



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