



Healthy Snacking

As with most things related to nutrition, there is considerable debate amongst experts and lay people alike about snacking. Is it good or bad? Should you eat 8 small meals a day or fast all day and eat only 1 large meal? All sides can find some “scientific research” to support their beliefs, and while they continue to hash it out, the rest of us are left thinking, *I don't know what's right, but I'm hungry!*

I like to know the answers. Black and white facts. But I've realized that whether we're talking about healthcare, nutrition, or wellness in general, black and white doesn't exist. So, I don't know the answer to the *is snacking good or bad* question, but I have a few thoughts. First, we're all different with unique needs. Rarely is any answer going to be one size fits all. If you wonder whether snacking works for you or if you're better off eating only 2-3 meals per day, try your own experiment. Keep in mind that your answer will not be clear in a day. If you're significantly changing your eating style, give yourself several days to let your body adjust. Pay attention to how you feel after each meal/snack and throughout the day in general. Feeling tired, sleepy, bloated, gassy, light-headed, or constipated are signs that your food (*what* you're eating as well as how often you eat) are not ideal for you. So, before you reach for the tums or pepto, consider making a change in what and when you eat.

Also, before snacking maybe we need to ask ourselves *why* we are eating. So often food is an easy, short-term fix for other things in our life, and no matter who you are, eating when you're not really hungry because your significant other is a jerk is not healthy. Ever wonder why after eating everything in sight all day, you're still hungry? It could be that your body really did need more calories that day, *or* it could mean that you were craving something other than food and you still haven't satisfied that need. So, before reaching for a snack, stop and really listen to your body. Are you hungry? Are you angry, sad, anxious? Is food what you need, or do you need to take a walk, read a book, meditate or pray, or have a conversation with someone?

For those times when your tummy is rumbling and asking for food, my recommendation is start small. Eat a little and don't consider eating more for at least 20 minutes. If you're still legitimately hungry after this time, have another small snack.

Finally, make it healthy! Often our bodies crave what we're depleted in nutritionally. You're more likely to feel full if you match your snack (or your meals for that matter) with what your body needs. That doesn't mean if you're craving something sweet, eat some cake. There are other ways to fill a sweet craving. Here are some healthy snacking suggestions to fit common types of cravings.



Snacks to satisfy your cravings

Salty/savory

1. Baked Kale chips (can buy at many stores like Trader Joes, or make your own with the recipe that follows)
2. Miso (fermented soy bean paste, can be purchased at Trader Joes, most natural food stores, Asian markets) lightly spread onto toast, rice cakes, etc.
3. Roasted vegetables (recipe follows)
4. Pistachios (you can get the lightly salted kind which can still satisfy the craving. Plus, this snack can help slow you down by making you take the time to open each seed from the shell!)
5. Most fermented foods (just read the labels to make sure they're truly fermented and not just swimming in white vinegar) are great and you get the added benefits of their natural probiotics. Try sauerkraut, pickles, dilly beans, etc

Sweet

1. Banana ice cream (recipe follows)
 - Also try: A frozen banana topped with peanut or almond butter (let the banana sit out of the freezer for about 10 minutes so it softens, you can freeze it with the toppings on it if you'd like)
2. Chocolate chia pudding (recipe follows)
3. Whole, frozen, or dried fruits. Try mixing up your flavors if you get bored!
4. Smoothies (the possibilities are endless, see below for some creative new combinations to try, even sneak in some greens without even noticing!)
5. Sweet smelling hot tea (hot teas can be great for cravings especially during these cold months. Look for various teas with sweet scents like coconut, almond, fruits, cocoa, etc)
 - Try a splash of milk and/or a drop of honey to bring out the flavors if needed

Crunchy

1. Roasted nuts (you can buy them already roasted and lightly salted or do it yourself by spraying with a little bit of water or oil, sprinkling with seasoning, then baking at 300 for a few minutes. Be sure to watch them closely because they go from done to burnt fast!)
2. Raw veggies (really savor the crunch of carrots, celery, cauliflower, etc)
 - Try dipping in a little hummus, peanut/almond butter, salad dressing, etc
3. Roasted chick peas (recipe follows)
4. Popcorn (try making your own on the stove top or in a microwave popper so you control the added flavoring)
5. Roasted sweet potato chips (recipe follows)

Rich/fatty

1. Avocado sprinkled with salt, pepper, and lemon juice or your favorite seasoning
2. Larabar (Find at Trader Joe's, Kroger, Earth Fare)- these healthier granola bar options contain nothing but bare basics—dates, nuts, and sometimes seasonings
3. Chocolate and almond butter fudge (recipe follows)
4. Coconut Cinnamon Sweet Potato Fries (recipe follows)
5. Banana and avocado mash sprinkled with unsweetened coconut flakes
 - Just cut bananas and avocados into a bowl and stir/blend with a spoon just until somewhat mixed. Top with coconut flakes, nut, cinnamon, or your favorite healthy topping



The Recipes

Salty/Savory

1. Baked Kale Chips

This recipe makes 4 - 6 servings

Ingredients

- 1 bunch kale (rinsed and dried)
- Coconut or olive oil cooking spray
- 1/4- 1/2 tsp. sea salt

Directions

- Preheat oven to 400° Fahrenheit.
- Remove kale from stalks and break into 2-inch pieces.
- Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil. Spray foil with cooking spray. Spread kale out over sheet, making sure the pieces don't overlap. Spray the kale generously with cooking oil and sprinkle with salt.
- Bake for 9-15 minutes (the amount of time will vary with each oven) until the edges of the kale are nicely browned. Enjoy right away!

2. Roasted Vegetables

These are simple and pretty fast. If you either keep pre-cut veggies on hand or buy the pre-cut bags at the store, these take almost no effort!

Ingredients

- Desired veggies.
 - I find these the fastest and they get a bit crispier for a good snack: carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, red bell peppers
 - Others to try that are also delicious: onions, parsnips, butternut squash, Brussel sprouts...
- Oil spray
- Seasonings as desired (optional): salt, garlic, pepper, chili powder...

Directions

- Pre-heat oven to 415°
- Place all veggies on a baking sheet
- Spray lightly with oil then sprinkle with seasoning if using
- Roast veggies 20-30 minutes or until edges of veggies start to darken and crisp



Sweet

1- Banana Ice Cream

Rule to live by: *never throw away a rotten banana* 😊 Peel it and put it in the freezer. They're great sweeteners in any baking recipe and this ice cream is an addicting, amazing replacement for dairy, sugary ice cream!

Ingredients

- All you really need is 1 frozen banana, but if you want to get creative, also try these add-ins:
 - Splash of milk, almond milk, coconut milk, etc
 - Vanilla
 - Peanut or almond butter
 - Cocoa powder (overripe bananas are so sweet they combine with plain cocoa powder to make a chocolate delight!)
 - Pumpkin puree with pumpkin pie spice

Directions

- Let your banana sit out at room temperature for 10-20 minutes to allow it to soften slightly
- Place all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth

2- Chocolate chia pudding

Chia seeds are a great way to thicken things like smoothies and puddings. As they sit in the liquid for a few minutes, they naturally thicken. Chia + water can also be a replacement for eggs in some recipes.

Ingredients

- 1 cup unsweetened vanilla almond milk
- 1/4 cup chia seeds
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon raw cacao powder
- 1/2 - 1 cup berries (raspberries are great)

Directions

- Place all ingredients in a blender, and mix well. Refrigerate for about 10 minutes while it forms a 'pudding' like consistency.

3- Smoothies

The possibilities are almost endless when it comes to smoothies. Just throw everything in a blender and blend until smooth! (Add extra water or milk to help it blend if it's too thick) Here are some you may not have tried before. Try to sneak in some greens whenever you can!



Combinations to try

- Apple pumpkin: 1/4 cup 100% pure pumpkin purée, 1 large apple, 1/2 small frozen banana, 2 tsp cocoa powder, cinnamon/nutmeg to taste, 1 Tbsp peanut/ almond butter, 1 cup unsweetened almond milk, vanilla extract
- Ginger chai: 1 cup of frozen mango, 1/2 cup of freshly brewed chai tea, 1 tsp. freshly grated ginger, 1/2 of a frozen banana, 1/4 cup coconut milk, 1 tsp. cinnamon
- Pear mango green smoothie: 1 large pear, 1 cup frozen mango, 2 to 3 handfuls spinach, 2 stalks kale, 1 cup water (more for a thinner consistency)
- Blueberry muffin: 1 cup almond milk, 1 banana, 1/2 cup frozen or fresh blueberries, 1/4 cup oats, 4 ice cubes, 1 Tbsp. ground flaxseeds, 1/2 Tbsp. cinnamon, 1 Tbsp. chia seeds
- Mixed bag of deliciousness: generous handful of spinach, 1 raw beet, 2 frozen bananas, 1 ½ cup of frozen mixed berries (blueberries, raspberries, strawberries), ½ avocado, 2 cups of almond milk, chia seeds



Crunchy

1. Roasted chick peas

To save time you can make a big batch and store the seasoned chickpeas in an airtight container for days. You can use canned chickpeas (garbanzo beans) if you're in a pinch, but I prefer soaking dried beans overnight. Cook them the next day as directed on the package then use just like canned beans.

Ingredients:

- 3 cans of organic chickpeas
- 3 tablespoons coconut oil, melted (olive oil will work, too)
- 1 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1 1/2 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin

Instructions:

- Preheat oven to 200°F.
- Drain and rinse chickpeas and dry thoroughly on paper towel.
- In the hot oven, bake the chickpeas by themselves for about 10-15 minutes to ensure they are dry. This will mean that your flavoured chickpeas will be even crispier!
- In the melted coconut oil, add all of the spices and salt and mix to combine. Add the chickpeas to the flavouring, making sure all of the chickpeas are coated.
- Lay them out on a baking tray and bake for 30-40 minutes or until crunchy. Cool completely and store in an airtight container.

2. Roasted sweet potato chips

Ingredients

- 3/4 pound sweet potatoes
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin

Directions

- Preheat oven to 425°.
- Cut 3/4 pound sweet potatoes into 1/4-inch-thick slices; set aside.
- Com bine 1 tablespoon olive oil, 1 1/2 teaspoons chili powder, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin.
- Add sweet potatoes; toss gently to coat.
- Cover a lightly oiled nonstick baking sheet with a single layer of potatoes; roast, turning once, until golden and tender (about 20 minutes)



Rich/fatty

Chocolate and almond butter fudge

Ingredients

- 1 cup coconut oil
- 1 cup almond butter (you can also use unsalted crunchy peanut butter)
- 2 cups raw cacao
- 1 cup dates (pitted)
- 1 to 2 pinches of unrefined sea salt

Directions

- Soak dates in hot water for about 20 minutes to make them soft and sticky.
- Carefully melt coconut oil on very low heat.
- Place all ingredients, except the almond butter, in high speed blender and blend until soft and well combined.
- Add the almond butter at the end to keep the crunch.
- Spread evenly in a tin or container and place in the fridge for about one hour.

Coconut Cinnamon Sweet Potato Fries

Ingredients

- 4 medium sweet potatoes, scrubbed
- 2 Tbsp. coconut oil, melted
- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp. salt

Directions

- Preheat oven to 400° Fahrenheit.
- Cut ends off sweet potatoes and peel if they are not organic. Slice them lengthwise, then into strips about 1/4" thick.
- In a large bowl, toss sweet potato slices with coconut oil, cinnamon and salt, making sure all pieces are coated.
- Spread out over baking sheet. Bake for 40-45 minutes (until edges are lightly browned), flipping halfway.