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11 Tips for Healthier Snacking

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Stop!

Put down those potato chips.

Did you know that mindless snacking by you or your tots can lead to overeating and consumption of too many sugars and processed foods? While snacking itself is a healthy activity, too many people reach for a bag of greasy chips or candy to satisfy their cravings. Instead, you should be reaching for a bowl of fruit.



We spoke with Beth Aldrich, author of *Real Moms Love to Eat: How to Conduct a Love Affair with Food and Still Look Fabulous!* (out January 2012) on ways you and your family can replace unwanted calories with a dose of healthy nutrition:

I love to snack! It's only human to want some nourishment in between meals, so when looking for snacks, try granola-topped yogurt, celery or carrots, whole-grain toast or whole grain crackers, apples or oranges. Better yet, try a whole grain (high fiber) cereal bar from Kashi. I've found their ingredient list to be very clean and free from chemicals and preservatives! Here are 11 other tips for healthier snacking:

1. Designate a snacking zone in your home to avoid countless calorie build up because of mindless munching in front of the TV or computer.
2. Make it quick. If you need to snack on the go, think beyond a bag of potato chips. Bring a handful of almonds, sunflower seeds or walnuts or even string cheese, yogurt sticks, cereal bars or other drip-free items to keep your car crumb free.
3. Don't be fooled by labeling gimmicks. Foods marketed as low-fat or fat-free can still be high in calories. Likewise, foods touted as cholesterol-free can still be high in fat, saturated fat and sugar. Check nutrition labels to find out the whole story.
4. Go for the grain. Whole-grain snacks – such as whole grain pretzels or tortillas and low-sugar, whole-grain cereals can give you energy with some staying power.
5. Out of sight, out of mind. If the cookie jar is full, you'll probably clamor for cookies. But if there aren't any cookies in the house, fresh fruit or raw veggies may seem more appealing.
6. Think outside the box and try something new, such as fresh pineapple, cranberries, red or yellow peppers, or roasted soy nuts. Slice a whole-wheat pita and enjoy with hummus.
7. Revisit breakfast. Many breakfast foods – such as low-sugar, whole-grain cereals and whole-grain toast make great afternoon snacks.
8. Use the freezer. When bananas have gotten black and soggy, simply peel and place in a freezer bag. Frozen bananas and berries mixed with apple juice and ground up flax makes a super mid-day snack.
9. Sweeten it up. Healthy snacks don't need to be bland. To satisfy your sweet tooth, try frozen yogurt or frozen fruit bars or agave nectar.
10. Remember your leftovers. A small serving of last night's casserole might make a great snack.
11. Drinks count too. Drink plenty of water between meals. Liven it up with a squirt of lemon, cranberry or other fruit juice.

Beth Aldrich is a Certified Nutrition and Healthy Lifestyle Counselor, spokesperson and author of the book, "Real Moms Love to Eat: How to Conduct a Love Affair with Food and Still Look Fabulous!" (Penguin Books, NAL, January 2012). You can read her blog at www.RealMomsLovetoEat.com

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