

To snack or not to snack?

EXTRA FUEL & NUTRIENTS

For anyone who's active, it's hard to get enough fuel for the day from just three meals. It's also hard to pack all the vitamins and minerals you need into those meals. So having a snack is a great way to get extra fuel and nutrients. Adding vegetables or greens to smoothies, bean dips or small bites will help boost the nutritional value and energy for your day.

BALANCE HUNGER & BLOOD SUGAR

Sometimes, we just get really hungry between meals! Particularly if your breakfast or lunch didn't have any protein or fat in it. Carbohydrates typically digest in about 3 hours, so the span between lunch and dinner can leave us hungry and low in blood sugar. Snacking will bridge the gap, so that you're not ravenous at dinner time, which can lead to overeating before you realize.

CONTAIN SNACK TIME

The way snacking gets unhelpful is if we munch our way through the whole afternoon. A better strategy is to have a snack specifically as a mini-meal.

WAIT TILL YOU'RE HUNGRY

Snacking also isn't helpful if you wind up not being hungry for your next meal. Try to figure out the best timing and amount to have as an afternoon snack so that you're still just slightly hungry for dinner. Not that you should starve yourself, just slightly hungry. It may not be possible with family dinners, but if you can, it's best to wait until you feel that first pang of hunger to have dinner.

BOTTOM LINE

If you're hungry between meals: have a snack.

Just don't snack all day.

If you're not hungry: don't have a snack.

Just don't let yourself get ravenous.

QUICK SNACK IDEAS

- rice cake or crackers with hummus
- half toasted pita with hummus + lettuce
- celery with peanut butter and raisins or dried cranberries (ants/ladybugs on a log)
- dates with almonds or almond butter
- apple with peanut butter
- cashews and dried figs
- orange slices with cinnamon
- banana with walnuts
- grapes with toasted sunflower seeds
- applesauce
- non-dairy chai latte with dark chocolate