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healing foods



On-the-Go Goodness

Healthy ways to satisfy snack attacks

BY LAURIE BUDGAR

If you grew up thinking that nibbling between meals was taboo, chew on this idea: “Snacking helps keep your metabolism fueled, your energy up, and your blood sugar stable,” says Keri Glassman, RD, author of *The Snack Factor Diet* (Crown, 2007). “Snacks also help you control cravings throughout the day and can improve your mood.”

According to Glassman, snacks should contain between 100 and 200 calories per serving and include at least 3 grams of protein, 5 grams of fiber, or 5 grams of healthy fat—or all three—to keep you feeling full. Unrefined mono- and polyunsaturated fats, like those found in avocados, nuts, seeds, and whole grains, are best, says Shaya Mercer, a nutrition counselor and store

marketing specialist for Whole Foods Market. Avoid trans fats and artificial additives, including synthetic colors, sweeteners, and flavors. While fresh, whole foods like fruit, vegetables, seeds, and nuts are ideal, Glassman adds, “This is real life, and sometimes we have to eat out of a package.”

The next time you find yourself in need of a snack from a bag, box, or wrapper, remember that nutrient density is key to healthy noshing. “The more nutrients you get per calorie, the fewer calories you need to feel satisfied,” says Mercer. Here are simple ways to solve six types of packaged-snack needs.

Worth their salt

Go ahead, get your salt fix—just be sure to keep your overall sodium intake

below 2,400 mg a day, Glassman says. Mercer takes a slightly harder line, recommending that snacks have no added salt or be listed as “low sodium,” meaning they must contain 140 mg or less of sodium per serving. If possible, seek alternatives to processed wheat-based snacks like pretzels and crackers. “In our culture, we tend to eat wheat three meals a day, so we are more vulnerable to developing sensitivities to wheat and gluten,” says Mercer. For hand-to-mouth munching that won’t up your daily gluten quota, try nuts, which are loaded with healthy fats and heart-boosting nutrients like L-arginine and vitamin E; fiber-rich popcorn; dehydrated veggies; and chips made from soy or vegetables, which are often higher in fiber, vitamins, and protein than potato-based chips.

TRY IT: Terra Exotic Vegetable Chips, Original (\$4.60, 6.5 oz; terrachips.com) are made from taro, yucca, and other root veggies and contain 3 grams of fiber and 8 percent of your daily vitamins A and C per serving. **Oogie’s Popcorn** (\$3.50, 5 oz; oogiesnacks.com) is popped from nongenetically modified corn and comes in tasty flavors like Movie Lovers Butter and Chili Con Queso. **Snappea Crisps** (\$1.50, 3.3 oz; snacksalad.com) are additively crunchy snacks made from pea flour and seasonings and offer the same amount of fiber, iron, calcium, and vitamin C found in fresh peas.

Sugary rewards

Mercer prefers snacking on foods sweetened without refined sugar because they are less likely to spike blood sugar, which can fuel cravings and lead to weight gain. Her top picks for satisfying a sweet tooth without too much of the refined stuff include freeze-dried fruit, agave- or fruit juice-sweetened cookies, and high-fiber energy bars made from nuts and fruit. Mercer also recommends dark chocolate-covered superfruits like goji berries or mulberries—“an antioxidant-rich snack if I’ve ever seen one,” she says. Just be careful not to overdo it on dried fruits, which are high in natural sugar.

TRY IT: Kopali Organic Dark Chocolate Covered Mulberries (\$4, 2 oz; kopaliorganics.com) are sweet fruit treats rich in antioxidants. **Nana’s “O” Mega Fiber Cookie Bars** (\$6, 6.2 oz; healthycrowd.com) pack 5 grams of fiber per bar. **Funky Monkey** (\$2.20, 1 oz; funkymonkeysnacks.com) freeze-dried fruit snacks boast 3 grams of fiber and a whopping 70 percent of your daily vitamin A and 30 percent of your daily vitamin C per serving, in the MangOJ flavor—without added sugar or fat.

Sweet and salty

When just one taste sensation won’t do, go for both sweet and salty by snacking on trail mix, nut-laden granola, or naturally sweetened peanut-butter packets. The protein, fiber, and heart-healthy fats in most trail mixes mean you need only about a handful to kick hunger to the curb, says Mercer. The nuts and seeds in trail mix and granola are also great sources of magnesium, a trace mineral important for healthy bones, adds Mercer. Glassman likes portable pouches of peanut, almond, and hazelnut butters, which come in sweet flavors like maple and chocolate and provide 6 to 7 grams of protein per serving.

TRY IT: Navitas Naturals Trail Power (\$5.50, 4 oz; navitasnaturals.com) blends three types of berries and cacao nibs with raw cashews, delivering 30 percent of your daily vitamin A per serving. **Two Moms in the Raw Gluten-Free Goji Berry Granola** (\$10, 8 oz; 2momsintheraw.com) packs a salty-sweet punch into breakfast with sprouted seeds, raw nuts, dried fruits, sea salt, and agave. **Justin’s Nut Butters** (\$0.60–\$1 for 1.2 oz; justinsnutbutter.com) sells individual squeeze packs in flavors that combine a hint of sweet with just the right amount of salt.

Saving up for savory

For a rich, full flavor, turn to foods that blend strong seasonings with protein-rich ingredients. Healthy choices include spiced whole-grain crackers, string cheese, meatless jerky, and individually sized packages of garlicky guacamole. If you’re adventurous, try roasted seaweed, nori crackers, or wild-caught kipper—a