

15 Diabetes-Friendly Snack Tips

Keep your blood sugar steady with a smart and satisfying snack!

If you go more than four or five hours between meals, a mid-afternoon snack might be just what the doctor ordered to help you keep your blood sugar steady. Snacking is also important if you're taking medication that could cause a blood-sugar low between meals. Discuss with your doctor or a registered dietitian what snacking approach is right for you.



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Help keep your snacking honest.

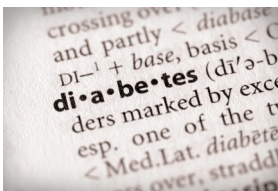
1. Keep your snacks to 150 calories or less. The danger of snacks is that they can become more like extra meals if you go overboard. First, make sure you're truly hungry—and not just bored or stressed or craving chocolate—before reaching for a snack. Then limit yourself to 150 calories per snack. This will help keep your snacking "honest." After all, it's hard to find a candy bar with only 150 calories. And if you're hankering for a candy bar, but a healthier snack doesn't appeal, you're probably not truly hungry.

2. Beware of low-fat snacks. Studies show that people tend to eat about 28 percent more of a snack when it's low-fat because they think they're saving on calories. But low-fat snacks such as cookies only have about 11 percent fewer calories than their full-fat counterparts. Stick to the same amount you'd eat if you thought the snack was full-fat.

3. Plate your snacks. Eat straight out of the bag and you're guaranteed to eat more, whether it's chips, pretzels, or cookies. Instead, put a small portion on a plate, seal up the bag and put it away, then sit down and enjoy your snack.

4. Grab the whole bag. A single serving bag, that is. You're much more likely to stop after one serving if you don't have to measure it out yourself. If paying more for extra packaging that will eventually clog landfills bothers you, separate your snacks yourself into reusable single-serving containers when you get home from the grocery store so they're ready to grab when you're ready to eat them.

5. Pour a handful of nuts. Almonds, walnuts, pecans, peanuts, and cashews contain the healthy monounsaturated fats that lower cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease. And because they're packed with protein and "good" fat, they won't raise blood sugar as much as crackers or pretzels do. Because many nuts are high in calories (almonds are the lowest), stick to an ounce, or about the amount that will fit in the palm of your hand.



15 Diabetes-Friendly Snack Tips (continued)

6. Have a few whole-grain crackers with peanut butter. You'll eat more protein and fewer carbs than if you have a bigger pile of crackers with no peanut butter, and your blood sugar won't rise as much.



7. Snack on raw veggies. Get in an extra serving of vegetables by nibbling on grape tomatoes, carrots, red and green peppers, cucumbers, broccoli crowns, and cauliflower. Eat them plain or dip them into nonfat yogurt, a light salad dressing, or hummus (stick with 1 to 2 tablespoons' worth).

8. Spread some black bean salsa over eggplant slices. The salsa has only about 15 grams of carbs, 80 calories, and 1 gram of fat.



9. Sip a small cup of vegetable soup. Cook non-starchy vegetables such as spinach, onion, celery, green beans, and squash in some vegetable or chicken stock. It's filling, full of veggies, and low in carbs.

10. Indulge in a few decadent bites. Have a snack of three dried apricots, a small piece of dark chocolate (about the size of a Hershey's miniature chocolate bar), and three walnuts or almonds, suggests Vicki Saunders, RD, who teaches nutrition education programs at St. Helena Hospital in Napa Valley, California. Savor every nibble!



11. Blend a fruit smoothie. Combine half of a chopped banana, 3/4 cup nonfat plain yogurt, and a non-nutritive sweetener, and blend until smooth.

12. Freeze grapes and peeled bananas. Seal them in a sandwich bag and throw it into the freezer. Once frozen, they're a refreshing and healthy treat. You can eat 20 red seedless grapes and still consume only 100 calories.



13. Eat an apple—and the skin. An apple with the skin contains about 3 grams of fiber. The skin packs a double whammy, carrying healthy soluble fiber that helps to lower cholesterol and prevent heart disease and antioxidants that fight free radicals and lower the risk of diabetes complications.

14. Try low-fat string cheese. Each one contains only 80 calories. These are one of the few portable goodies rich in sugar-steadying protein.

15. Have your chocolate "bar" frozen. By that we mean enjoy a frozen fudge pop. They taste delightfully chocolatey but contain only about 80 calories.



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