



Living

[\[Print\]](#) [\[Email\]](#)



## Snack smarter, get slimmer

By: [Mehment Oz](#) and [Michael Roizen](#)

Washington Examiner

January 3, 2010

If you're planning your New Year's slim-down strategy, you may be thinking that eating small, frequent meals and snacks can help. You're right! Frequent eating can be good; a healthy, moderate-size nibble can put the brakes on between-meal hunger, so you don't tear into your next meal like it was your last. Success comes most (at least in studies and reports from our patients and people who write us) to those who have three meals and two snacks every day.

Yet some studies show that people who munch frequently weigh more than people who munch less often. The problem? A good habit turns bad when you eat too many calories in each snack and don't enjoy them enough (and don't stop when you're not enjoying them).

Consider the results of a recent State University of New York at Buffalo study that compared the snacking habits of women who were overweight with women who weren't. For two weeks, researchers gave both groups a decadent 300-calorie snack. After 14 days of snarfing down the same snack, all the women reported they were sick and tired of eating it over and over again. But that's where the similarities end. The smaller women simply ate progressively less and less of it, while their heavier counterparts kept chowing just as much, even though they didn't enjoy it.

So how do you snack smarter? Use these tips to make between-meal nibbles work for you:

**Time snacks right:** Munching on your favorite goodies an hour after lunch or dinner isn't a snack -- it's dessert! Snacks work best two and a half to four and a half hours after a meal. That's when blood sugar levels dip and you start feeling famished. Ignore your growling stomach for too long, and you'll be ravenous by the time your next meal rolls around -- and you'll end up inhaling more than you planned. To get the most mileage out of your snack, feed your body when it really needs it.

**Keep it snack size:** Your snacks should be in the 100- to 200-calorie range. That's enough to tide you over between meals, but it's not so much that your snack becomes a meal. If six or seven walnut halves look puny to you, then switch to a more robust-looking snack that contains the same number of calories. How about a cup of sauteed veggies warmed in the microwave and stuffed into a small whole-wheat pita, or low-fat, no-sugar-added yogurt with some mandarin oranges and raisins? Works for us.

**Change your idea of a snack:** Keep snacks healthy, and you'll be less likely to lose control and overdo it.

Researchers at Penn State University found that when people were offered heaping helpings of high-calorie, fat-filled snacks like cookies, candy and chips, they (not surprisingly) feasted on way more than when good-for-you fruits and veggies were on the menu. The best between-meal eats to put a lid on hunger? Those that combine slowly digested protein and fiber, such as a pear and some nuts, or whole-grain crackers with hummus. They will keep your blood sugar on an even keel and your appetite in check.

Think strategically: Don't wait until you're ready to eat your hand to decide what you're going to snack on. Healthy eating starts in the supermarket. Make a list of go-to healthy snacks you can grab in a pinch. Then, stock your fridge, pantry and office with them.

And when you eat something, savor it. Stop working, reading or watching TV, and focus on the taste, smell and texture of what you're having. One small morsel at a time.

Ask whether it's hunger -- or something else: Lots of times you snack because you crave something emotional (or even because you're thirsty) and you're not even hungry. Before you tear into that bag of chips or sleeve of cookies, ask yourself if you'd be just as satisfied by eating an apple or a banana. If the answer is no, hunger probably isn't behind your need to nosh.

*The YOU Docs, Mehmet Oz and Mike Roizen, are authors of "YOU: On a Diet." To submit questions, visit [realage.com](http://realage.com).*

**Find this article at:**

[http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/entertainment/living/Snack-smarter\\_-get-slimmer-8695024-80356092.html](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/entertainment/living/Snack-smarter_-get-slimmer-8695024-80356092.html)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.