



Snack

Americans are snackers. For instance, during the Superbowl, we munch on about 125,000 pounds of pretzels, chips, popcorn and nuts a minute; 30 million pounds by the end of the game.

At work about half of us snack two or three times a day. By the end of today, as a group, we'll have eaten \$22 million worth of candy—almost a million dollars an hour for every hour of every day.

If you snack unwisely, these munchies can expand your waistline and sabotage your health. But if you snack wisely, you can keep your taste buds fulfilled, your brain working at top capacity and your body satisfied.



Attack

By
Chrystle Fiedler

When searching for snack satisfaction, think protein. Protein bars and protein shakes keep you feeling fuller longer on fewer calories than sweets.

Second to protein, think fiber, as in fresh fruit, dried fruit, or whole grain breads and crackers.

Unlike carbohydrates that break down into sugars and may be quickly stored as body fat, protein-rich snacks release sugar into your bloodstream at a slow, steady and healthy pace. That keeps you satisfied longer on fewer calories.

"Protein is an important building block (for the body)," says Alicia Gonzalez, ND, a teaching fellow at Bastyr University in Kenmore, Washington. "It breaks down into amino acids as precur-

sors to things like neurotransmitters, hormones and muscle."

Besides eating protein-rich snacks, eat protein with every meal and eat it first. "It will help your body absorb sugar at a slower rate."

"Protein and fiber are the best at helping the body absorb sugar at an optimal rate," says Jon Gordon, author of *Become an Energy Addict* (Longstreet Press).

"Protein bars release sugar at a slower rate, resulting in more balanced blood sugar levels and greater overall energy," Gordon says. "You'll crave sugar less and will have a more sustained source of energy all day long."

Protein Bars' Power

"The biggest advantage of protein bars, besides their convenience,

is the fact that they do have considerably more protein, say 10 grams, than candy bars, which can contain as little as 2 grams," says Dr. Gonzalez.

Total fat tends to be much less in a protein bar, too.

When choosing a protein bar, Dr. Gonzalez says, "Look for total protein content, say, between 10 and 12 grams and total fat, no more than 5 grams, and be careful with high sodium content."

"Choose a protein bar closest to nature," says Gordon. "Like one with almonds and cashews. Nuts are full of nutrients and minerals. Nuts are also a source of fiber."

If you exercise, protein bars with whey or soy protein make for quick replacement of necessary nutrients. "Eating a protein



bar an hour before exercising helps to maintain that energy boost you need and replenishes minerals you lose when working out," says Dr. Gonzalez.

Some protein bars, though, do a bait n' switch with saturated fats and trans fatty acids, says Dawn Weatherwax, RD, author of *The Official Snack Guide for Beleaguered Sports Parents* (WellCentered Books). "If the label says hydrolyzed or hydrogenated palm oil, that's as bad as saturated fat. People think they're doing the healthy thing by eating a protein bar but they end up getting the wrong type of fat."

Besides protein bars, other healthy and healthful snacks include whole grain bread with peanut butter and cheese on whole grain, high-fiber crackers. "Mixing fiber and protein will help you sustain your energy," says Gordon. "Yogurt is also very good."

Smooth Sailing

"Smoothies are also wonderful (snacks)," says Weatherwax. "Add protein powder, silken tofu and fruit to them and you can have them as a meal replacement."

"Nuts like cashews, almonds, seeds and dried berries are some of the best snacks that you can eat because you're not getting all that sugar," says Dr. Gonzalez. "Nuts have a good balance of good fat versus bad fat, including essential fatty

acids, which are really important for cellular health and overall well-being. A combination of nuts, seeds and dried berries provides you with a good mix of all the vitamins and minerals along with the good fats that you need to be healthy."

When snacking, think about variety. "Mix it up, have a protein bar one day, a protein shake the next," says Gordon. "Combine protein with a healthy carbohydrate and

the furnace stoked," says Weatherwax, a consulting dietician for the Cincinnati Reds baseball team. "The goal is to eat every three or four hours. You have breakfast and lunch and you need an afternoon snack. That's the hardest one to get. Most people don't want to eat another sandwich; they want snack food. So a protein bar with a carb like a piece of fruit, an apple, orange or banana...is a great combination."

Energizing Snacks

Try these snacks for a pick-up that won't quickly drop your feelings of well-being like a hot, french-fried potato.

- Smoothie made with organic blueberries, soy or whey protein powder, flax oil, yogurt and ice: provides phytonutrients, protein, calcium, probiotic bacteria, healthy fats
- Handful of raisins and raw nuts (almonds, walnuts, etc.): rich in fiber; provides bioflavonoids, vitamin E, healthy fats
- Whole grain bread with a piece of cheese: rich in insoluble dietary fiber, calcium, protein
- Bowl of whole grain cereal with soy milk: has protein and fiber
- Vegetarian chili or soup: fills you up on few calories; beans provide protein and fiber
- A piece of fruit: has fiber, vitamin C, carotenoids
- Whole wheat cracker or toasted whole grain bread with peanut butter: has fiber, vitamin E
- Hummus, on whole wheat pita bread with vegetables: rich in fiber, B vitamins
- Celery and almond butter: phytonutrients in celery may lower blood pressure; almonds are high in healthy oils and vitamin E

you'll have much more sustained energy throughout the day."

"Studies show if you have moderate-size meals plus small between-meal snacks you increase your levels of energy and alertness," says Gordon. "It also optimizes your memory and performance and gives you a steady flow of energy rather than the rises and falls. Without healthy snacks your blood sugar falls and you experience fatigue and tension.



Fuel for Your Fire

"We're like a train, we need to keep

Just as we need to constantly feed a fire with moderate-sized pieces of wood, we also need to continually