

SNACK ATTACK

Who says you can't snack when you have diabetes? Ong Li Jiuen, dietitian, Changi General Hospital, shows you how to snack smart.

Did you know that a handful of almond nuts (about 15 nuts) contains almost 100 calories. If you eat a cup of almond nuts, you would have eaten almost 800 calories! That's almost equivalent to eating a burger with fries!

But smart snacking can help keep blood sugar and energy levels stable throughout the day and can help prevent overeating at meals, which may lead to weight gain and poor blood sugar control.

Nuts (e.g. walnuts, almonds, groundnuts, etc) are good sources of protein and contain heart healthy fats such as polyunsaturated fats. As a rule of thumb, allow no more than a handful (<30g) per day as nuts can add on a lot of calories and should be taken in moderation. Also, choose nuts that are baked and unsalted.

Fruits and vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are useful ingredients to prepare low calorie salads. Eating fruits and vegetables also increase the feeling of satiety, that is feeling full and satiated, with little or almost no fat content and contain only a small number of calories. Fruits and vegetables also provide a good source of vitamins, minerals, fibre and other nutrients.

You can make a healthy fruit and vegetable salad using cut fruits or vegetables such as orange or apple, celery, broccoli, tomatoes, capsicum, cucumber, etc.

You can make low fat dressing from a mixture of low fat yoghurt with added herbs and spices such as pepper, garlic, etc.

Vegetables can be cut into the form of 'sticks', e.g. cut celery, carrot, cucumber into bite-sized 'sticks', and dipped into any low fat dressings as a healthier snack to curb hunger.

Fruits or starchy vegetables (e.g. potatoes or sweet potatoes, sweet corn, etc) contain carbohydrate and calories. They should be counted as part of your carbohydrate intake.

Wholegrain products

Wholegrain products provide can be prepared into high fibre snacks which aid digestion and provide early satiety. For a product to be considered high fibre, it should provide at least 6g fibre per 100g.

Wholemeal crackers or biscuits (even if it is sugar-free/ suitable for people with diabetes) contain calories and should be eaten moderately. When choosing biscuits, choose those with minimal or no trans fat. So, instead of butter crackers, choose oatmeal cookies.

Dairy products

- **Low fat cheese** contains 130mg calcium per serving (~20g) with minimal amount of carbohydrate per serving as compared to low fat milk.

Combining cheese with wholemeal crackers will be a healthy snack alternative to cookies or those cream-filled ones.

Choose low fat/ reduced fat cheese with lower salt content.

- **Low fat yoghurt** is a good source of calcium and protein and yet provides less fat.

Low fat yoghurt can be blended with low fat milk and added with moderate amount of fruits (remember to keep count of the carbohydrate content!) to prepare low fat fruit smoothies that are richer in vitamins and calcium.

Low fat yoghurt can also be frozen to make frozen yoghurt and can be enjoyed as an alternative to ice-cream.

Yoghurt is low in lactose but reading the nutrition facts to give you an idea of the carbohydrate content. Where possible, choose plain yoghurt as the carbohydrate (sugars) content will generally be lower than those with fruits added.

DO TRY THIS AT HOME!

Tuna or sardine sandwiches

Seasoned with natural flavourings (pepper/ salt/ cut chilli) and together with a few leaves of lettuce and a few slices of cucumber and tomatoes, this tuna or sardine sandwich makes a very healthy protein-rich snack.



When choosing canned fish, look for low salt versions, e.g. tuna in mineral water or sardines (reduced salt). You may want to drain the brine or oil or sauces contained in the canned fish for less salt and even calories intake.

Other high protein sandwich fillings:

- chicken breast
- egg (limit intake to not more than 3 eggs per week)
- low fat cheese

Tips to remember:

- Make it a habit to read the nutrition facts to know the amount of calories and especially the carbohydrate content of your snack portion.
- Remember to include the carbohydrate portion of the snack as part of your overall meal plan.
- If you are not sure of the portion sizes when estimating servings of food, use measuring cups and spoons.
- Avoid mindless snacking in front of the TV, reading, or while driving.
- Stock up on healthy options and avoid shopping when you are hungry to decrease temptation of buying more than you need or set out to buy.
- Prevent excess calories intake by choosing snacks that provide less than 100 to 150kcal per serving. Choose snacks that provide less than 15g carbohydrate per serving. This is so that you can keep count of your calories and carbohydrate intake and ensure that you do not exceed your daily intake if you have to snack.



© Vevesoran nuts