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Snacking - a Matter of Management

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SNACKING

—a matter
of management

Extension Bulletin E-899 — Family Living Series

BY ANITA DEAN, Extension Specialist in Food Science and Human Nutrition

Snacking is a major American pastime ★ We're eating more food between meals than ever before ★ The average person has 6 to 7 "food contacts" per day — 3 meals and 4 snacks ★ Food contacts can range from 10 to 12 per day for children, to 25 to 44 for heavy snackers!

Snacking is not always harmful ★ It can be good for you, if you eat nutritious snacks and control the amount you eat ★ The trick is to plan meals and snacks with your total needs in mind ★ To get essential nutrients and minimum calories, you need a variety of foods from the **BASIC 4 FOOD GROUPS** (see chart on page 2).

STRATEGY

- Find out your daily nutrient and caloric needs.
- Know the nutrient content of basic foods and snack foods in relation to their calorie content. (See *Nutrient/Calorie Chart* on page 2).
- Adjust your daily "food contacts" to your needs and the nutrient-calorie values of foods.

At all age levels, snacks play a vital role in nutrition ● Preschoolers need snacks to be sure they get adequate nutrients ● Teenagers need snacks to ease their growing pains ● Adults need snacks, but fewer, since their energy needs are declining.

With careful planning, you can make snack foods work for you to replace skipped meals ● to control weight ● to delay hunger ● to replace omitted desserts ● to supplement inadequate meals ● to supply quick energy and ● to quench thirst.

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TACTICS

- Try three well-planned meals a day — maybe that's all you need.
- Cut out all between-meal "food contacts."
- Limit snacks to "free choice" foods (those with insignificant calories; see page 2).
- Postpone a salad, beverage, bread, or dessert to snack later.
- Adjust and limit portions (one cookie, not three; one apple, not two; a dozen potato chips, not half a bag).
- Snack on foods which supply nutrients often short in meals — vegetables, fruits, dairy foods — all are good sources of Vitamins A and C, calcium and riboflavin.
- Plan snacks and meals with total daily caloric intake in mind.
- Develop sales resistance and willpower.
- Include snack foods in regular meals to cut down on "special treats" between meals (potato chips with tuna salad and sliced tomatoes; a piece of candy as dessert).
- Promote nutritional labeling of snacks (already started with some foods).
- Ask restaurants and vending machine operators to add fruits, milk, cheese, enriched crackers.
- Increase your daily physical activity to use up any excess calories.

Rate Your Snacks

List some of your favorite between-meal snacks and beverages.

(These column headings correspond to the six lines of instructions A — F)

FAVORITE SNACKS	A	B	C	D	E	F
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

A
B
C
D
E
F

Rank them 1 to 10: 1, most preferred; 10, least preferred.

Place a dollar sign (\$) when you pay \$.50 or more for this snack.

Show how much you usually eat at one time — cup, ounce, portion.

Indicate how many times you had each one in the past week.

Identify the food group or groups which include this snack. (See code with the Basic Four. (For example, Milk group (MG).)

Identify foods high in nutrients with an "H"; those low in nutrients with an "L". (See example below). *What Changes, if any, Seem Desirable?*

SCORE WITH THE BASIC FOUR

- (MG) Milk Group
- (VF) Vegetable, fruit
- (MFP) Meat, fish, poultry, or alternatives: dry beans, peas, nuts, peanut butter
- (EC) Enriched or whole grain bread, cereal
- (OH) Other high calorie foods

Free Choice Foods
(Insignificant Calories — Unlimited Choice)

Raw Vegetables — cabbage, cauliflower, celery, cucumber, unsweetened pickles, lettuce, greens, mushrooms, green peppers, radishes, sauerkraut, summer squash, tomatoes, tomato juice, zucchini. (Try serving with a low-calorie cottage cheese or yogurt dip.)

Beverages — coffee, tea, clear broth (no fat), bouillion, soft drinks without sugar.

N/C

Nutrient/Calorie Ratio of Snacks

Some snacks are high in nutrients in relation to calories; others are high in calories in relation to nutrients. A glass of whole milk has a high nutrient/calorie ratio. A soft drink has low nutrient/calorie ratio.)

HIGH N/C

Enriched or whole grain breads, crackers, cereal
Nuts, seeds
Fresh fruits
Some fruit juices
Raw vegetables
Meat, fish, poultry
Bean dip
Milk, cheese
Ice cream, ice milk
Eggs: salad, hard cooked, deviled

LOW N/C

Soft drinks
Alcoholic beverages
Some powdered drinks*
Sweet rolls, doughnuts
Cake, pies, pastry
Rich cookies
Candy
Puffed snacks, chips
Popcorn
Unenriched crackers
Pretzels

*Check the label.

For more about the nutrients in your favorite snack read nutritional labels!