

# Healthy snacks

Most people eat between meals. The good news is that snacking doesn't have to be unhealthy. Why? Because snacks can provide an important contribution to your daily intake of energy, protein and essential vitamins and minerals.

Snacks can also help to keep you going through the day, especially if it's a long time between breakfast and lunch and lunch and your evening meal. Snacks can also help you to refuel after exercise, like going to the gym, playing sports or taking a long walk.

## Good Ideas for Snacks:

- Fruit – all varieties (fresh, canned, dried or frozen)
- Bowl of cereal with low fat milk
- Toast with peanut butter
- Vegetable sticks with dips
- Low fat hummus and pitta bread fingers
- Low fat yoghurt or fromage frais
- Glass of low fat milk
- Fruit smoothie
- Cup of vegetable soup
- Beans on toast
- Toasted English muffin
- Fruit scone, hot cross bun or current teacake
- Homemade unsalted popcorn
- Toasted bagel
- Bowl of instant oats
- Oatcakes, digestives or crackers
- Cereal and breakfast bars
- Mixed unsalted nuts

## Snacking sensibly:

- Plan to have snacks at regular times, rather than snacking at anytime of day
- Try not to snack in the hour before a mealtime
- Plan what you are going to have ahead of time. Don't rely on vending machines and news agents. They may not have anything suitable or may tempt you to eat the wrong thing
- Have a variety of different snacks rather than relying on one type of food
- Check out more satisfying snacks that fill you up, like wholegrain cereal bars, fruit and nuts or a pot of low fat yoghurt

Snacking is not just about grabbing anything at anytime. Get into good habits: regular snacks at regular times alongside your normal healthy balanced meals.

## What about Crisps, Chocolate and Sweets?

For most people it's OK to include a small amount of these foods. The important thing is to get the overall balance right. Opt for smaller portions like small bags of crisps and a few squares of dark chocolate.

Some brands of savory snacks are lower in salt and saturated fat than others so shop around for the best buys. Some sweets like boiled sweets, fruit gums, jellies and dolly mixtures contain little of no fat and can be eaten by most people in moderation. Be careful with these if you have a tendency towards raised triglycerides.

If you eat chocolate, choose dark chocolate that is high in cocoa solids. The fat in cocoa solids is mainly stearic acid and has little or no effect on cholesterol levels. Not only that but dark chocolate contains higher levels of flavonoids (also found in fruits, vegetables, tea and red wine) which appear to have heart health benefits.

Whatever you choose remember to keep portions of chocolate, crisps and sweets modest as they are high in energy but low in essential nutrients.