

The Secrets of Snacking Success

It can work for your diet—or it can get out of hand. Here's the skinny. **BY CINDY HATCHER**



whole grains, fiber, protein, and healthy fats. That's right: fats. Fats satiate and help to deliver certain flavors to the palate. (Read more about healthy fats on page 43.) Top high-flavor snack choices include smoked almonds, edamame, Greek yogurt, and sugar snap peas dunked in hummus. *Cooking Light* Food Editor and Social Diet participant Ann Pittman found that one of her favorite choices is a hard-cooked egg dipped in smoked salt, which she orders online.

gym after work but not yet hungry, it's OK to skip a pre-workout snack; just don't postpone dinner until 9 p.m.

The challenge here is that, while snacks are essential in dieting, they can also send calorie counts reeling. To keep things in check, first make sure your breakfast, lunch, and dinner are filling and satisfying. Then plan ahead and make or buy preportioned options so you don't fall face-first into an oversize chip bag or give in to a mega-muffin temptation at coffee break.

Timing is also important. Snacking should be mindful. Avoid automatic eating, regardless of hunger levels, but avoid waiting too long so that you avoid the trap of "hangry" overindulging.

Regardless of what you reach for, the key is to find foods that meet your flavor needs. "I had to come to peace with the fact that I'm just not a yogurt girl," says Pittman. "I want a snack that's salty and savory. It's about what works for *me* in *my* diet."

"Use hunger cues, but don't let yourself get to the famished point," Young says. If you're headed to the

A well-timed and well-chosen snack can be the best thing for a dieter's needs—whether physical ("I'm going to chew my arm off if I don't eat something right now") or mental ("I shouldn't have to deprive myself"). Yet you may be

reluctant to snack because it "steals" calories from the main meals.

"By 'legalizing' snacks as part of your eating routine, you won't feel like you've derailed your diet," says Lisa Young, PhD, RD, author of *The Portion Teller Plan*. Look for foods with staying power. That means a balance of

DIET DISTORTIONS

"WE HAVE THE SAME ODDS OF BEING OVERWEIGHT."



People often ask me if weight is genetic or if overweight people just eat more. This question, especially the use of the word *just*, implies that the cause of excess weight is either genetic or behavioral but not both. That's why weight loss can be so frustrating: For certain people, genetics makes weight loss more difficult. It's true that our own eating and exercise habits come into play, but some of us are predisposed to have a lower metabolic rate or accumulate more body fat than others. And there is substantial research indicating that genetic factors influence both how much we tend to eat and how much we tend to move.

BOTTOM LINE: If you're overweight, the laws of physics mean that at some point you took in more calories than you burned. Regardless of how much genetics factors in, the only way to lose weight is to expend more energy than you consume. Unfortunately for some of us, weight loss is just harder.

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