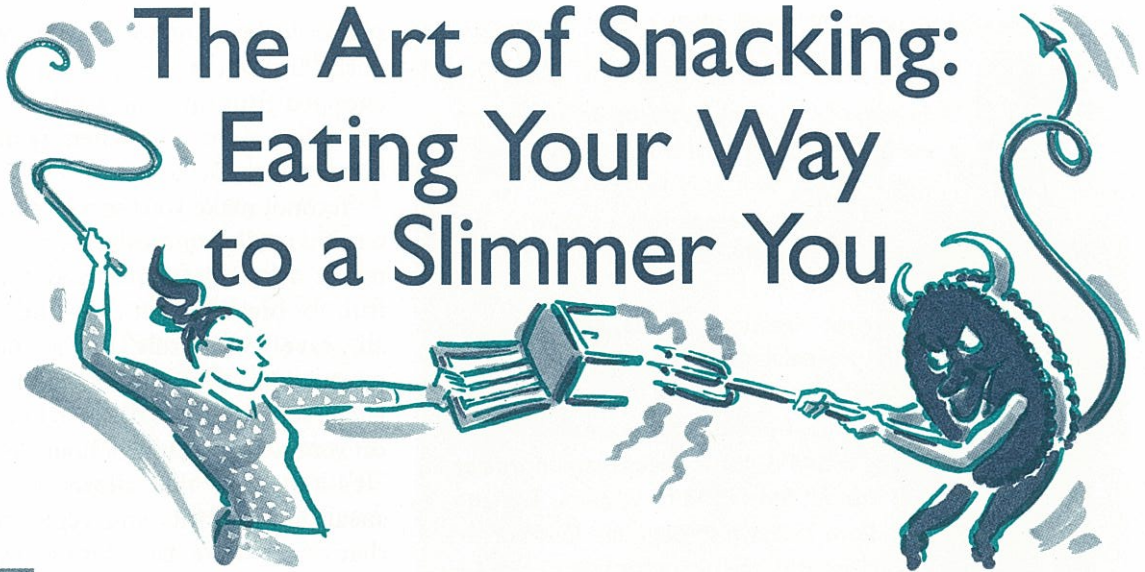


The Art of Snacking: Eating Your Way to a Slimmer You



To anyone trying to lose weight, snack foods can seem like little devils, luring you toward disaster.

So at the grocery store, we zoom past the tortilla chips. At the movie theater, we dodge the oversize candy bars and skip over the buckets of buttered popcorn. And at our annual office parties, we run from the layer cakes, hop around the cookies, and head for the nearest exit at the sight of those luscious brownies.

But as often as we say no to temptation, the struggle never gets any easier. "The problem is that snacking is woven in to the very fabric of our culture," says Joan Salge Blake, R.D., a registered dietitian and adjunct clinical professor of nutrition at Boston University. "Many of our social activities center around food, whether it's a coffee break, a sporting event, or a meeting."

"Just turn on the television or flip through a magazine, and all you see are images of food. This appears to play a large role in women's snacking habits," says Ashini Shah, R.D., a registered dietitian at the Obesity Consultation Center at the New England Medical Center in Boston.

Yet, despite all the reminders of food that are thrown in our path each day, there's enormous pressure on women to look as shapely as Fran Drescher and as thin as Heather Locklear. Talk about a contradiction. "Women can be very weight-conscious, so they feel like they can't eat all those delicious snacks that they see out there. The situation definitely creates a big conflict," says Susan Olson, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist and weight management specialist in Seattle.

So how can we make our lives easier in the constant struggle to resist all those beckoning goodies? Easy. Give in.

Making an Angel out of the Snack Devil

Yes, of course, eating too many Hershey Bars and Twinkies (or any excess calories, for that matter) between meals can feed into gaining a dress size. But contrary to what many women believe, snacking can actually be a healthy and nutritious addition to any weight loss meal plan.

"The trick is to prepare in advance what



WOMEN ASK WHY

Why am I so hungry in the morning when I just had a large meal the night before?

Common sense tells us that it's because we haven't eaten in several hours. But the answer isn't that simple.

As part of the normal digestion process, your stomach produces acid after every meal. And the more food you eat, the more acid it makes.

If you overate at dinner, the extra acid remains in your tummy all night, along with the gastric juices that it normally creates after going without food for 8 to 9 hours. The end result is stomach acid overload, which can cause loud hunger pangs and a voracious appetite the next morning.

Your hunger also may be caused by fluctuating blood sugar levels. Whenever you overeat, your pancreas pumps out massive amounts of insulin—the hormone responsible for getting glucose, or sugar, into your cells so that it can be used as energy. If your cells reject the glucose (which is common in people who are overweight), your pancreas will dump out even more insulin to try to get the job done. Meanwhile, excess insulin and glucose are floating around in your bloodstream. Research shows that insulin does two things: It stimulates your appetite, and it produces body fat.

So how do you break this vicious cycle? Drink at least 4 ounces of water and take a chewable antacid such as Tums before you hit the sack. This will greatly reduce stomach acid. Read package directions for the correct dosage.

To level your blood sugar, eat a breakfast high in protein first thing in the morning—before you drink that cup of coffee. Oatmeal, yogurt, cottage cheese, eggs, and protein drinks made with soy milk are all good choices. If you drink coffee before you eat, your stomach will churn out that acid again. And that's what you want to avoid.

Expert consulted
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snacks you're going to eat. Have yogurt, fresh cut vegetables, and chopped fruit on hand so that you can dig right in when you're hungry," says Blake.

Second, make your snacks an extension to all your meals. If you plan to eat a bowl of cereal and some fruit for breakfast but can't finish it all, save your fruit for a mid-morning snack. If you buy a sandwich, soup, and a salad for lunch, eat your salad a couple of hours later. "It's a strategy that allows you to sneak in the fruits and vegetables that you didn't eat during your meals. And it keeps you from eating the higher-calorie stuff," Blake says.

But if you must have something sinfully sweet, buy chocolate bars and cookies in single-serving-size packages only. That way, you won't devour a whole box or bag, says Blake. "You'll be shocked to discover how satisfied you are with eating less."

Here's another snacking bonus: Healthy, planned snacking can prevent you from piling too much food on your plate for lunch and dinner. And that translates into fewer calories consumed.

Taming Those Midnight Temptations

While snacking has many advantages, it also has its disadvantages—especially if you're used to eating rocky road ice cream during episodes of late-night talk shows.



WOMEN ASK WHY

Why can I go without food all day at work and not be hungry but become ravenous when I get home?

When you're at work, your mind is focused on deadlines, meetings, phone calls, and other tasks. So food is the last thing you think about, especially if you're trying to drop a few pounds. Also, you may not feel hungry because you don't work around food. You don't see it or smell it, so you're not tempted to eat it.

You're starving by the time you get home for the obvious reason: You haven't eaten all day. But there's more to this story than meets the eye.

Women who have a habit of skipping breakfast and lunch feel deprived and even go so far as to make mental IOUs to themselves, saying, "Well, I missed two meals, but when I get home, I'm going to make up for it."

What's more, the moment the workday ends, your mind starts to relax, and the reality that you're hungry starts to sink in. When that happens, your body starts producing excessive amounts of stomach acid because you haven't eaten all day, and that makes you feel even hungrier.

While all this is going on, you're thinking about the comforts of home, which for many women means a time in their childhood when Mom fixed them a snack whenever they returned from school.

So the moment you step foot into the house, you and your appetite are totally out of control.

The solution? Eat breakfast and lunch and two healthy snacks to get you through your day. Keep apples, bananas, pears, pretzels, or saltine crackers in your car or at work. And before you head home, drink a large glass of water to dilute stomach acid. You'll take the edge off your hunger, and you'll be a lot less likely to raid the refrigerator.

Expert consulted
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Why? Because at night, your body burns far fewer calories than it does during the day, which means that calories from what you eat after the sun goes down will likely show up as fat on your hips, butt, and thighs, says Audrey Cross, Ph.D., nutrition professor at the Institute of Human Nutrition at Columbia University in New York City. Here's how you can break the late-night-nibbling habit.

Stop skipping. The biggest error you can make if you want to lose weight is to skip breakfast and lunch and save your appetite for dinner. You'll be so hungry that not only will you eat a large dinner but you may also not stop eating for several hours afterward, warns Shah. And here's the real kicker: Because you'll be making up for lost meals, you'll consume the same number of calories—or more—in one sitting as you would normally eat throughout an entire day, she says.

Another drawback is that missing meals can drastically slow down your metabolism (the rate at which you burn fat and calories), says Maria Simonson, Ph.D., Sc.D., director of the health, weight, and stress clinic at Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions in Baltimore.

Fill 'er up. If you're not skipping meals but are still raiding the fridge at night, you're probably either not eating enough during the day or eating for reasons other than hunger, says Blake. "Women think that if they don't eat much during the day and eat a substantial dinner,

they'll lose weight. But most often, that only leads to overeating," says Shah.

The solution? Eat breakfast, lunch, a snack, and then dinner. That way, you won't feel like devouring two bags of potato chips when that Lifetime movie you've been dying to see comes on, says Dr. Cross.

Break a sweat. Walk, jog, weight train, or participate in a team sport such as softball, soccer, or volleyball. Why? Because physical activity relieves stress and builds self-esteem and, as a result, you may be more inclined to eat healthier, says Shah. Accumulating 20 to 30 minutes of exercise daily could help curb appetite and munching.

The Top 20 Weight Loss Snacks

The smart way to graze is to choose lower-fat, fiber-rich, nutritious foods and to eat no more than the recommended serving size, says Kitty Gurkin Rosati, R.D., a licensed dietitian/nutritionist, nutrition director of the Rice Diet Program at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, and author of *Heal Your Heart*.

Here's a list of the top 20 figure-friendly snacks that can fit into any woman's weight loss plan.

1. Freeze your fruit. Pluck some freshly washed grapes from a stem, arrange them on a small cookie sheet, and place them in the freezer. Once frozen, remove the grapes from the cookie sheet and enjoy. Store any remaining grapes in a zipper-top freezer bag and return to the freezer for up to 2 months. Serving size: ½



REAL-LIFE SCENARIO

She Sabotages Her Health with Late-Night Snacks

Lindsey, 42, makes a promise to herself every morning: Today, she will cut down her calories, do her daily exercise, and eat nothing in the evening after dinner. Why? She wants to lose 35 pounds. So every day, she pedals for 20 minutes on her stationary bike, grabs a cup of coffee for breakfast, and eats cottage cheese for lunch. For dinner, she has a full-course meal, including potatoes or pasta, a green vegetable, and chicken or fish. But around 10 P.M., she begins to feel famished. She struggles with her conscience ("Remember your promise, Lindsey"), but corn chips beckon from the pantry. She tells herself that she'll eat one serving: just 9 chips. But one serving turns into two, which can sometimes turn into an entire bag. Afterward, she feels nothing but guilt and self-loathing. And she has yet to lose her first ounce. How can she help herself?

Lindsey is getting off to a good start by beginning each day with 20 minutes of fat-burning aerobic exercise. But in order to reach her weight loss goals, she has to change her eating habits. Like many women battling to lose weight, Lindsey is skipping breakfast, skimping on lunch, and saving her appetite for dinner.

Whenever you miss meals, you deprive yourself of all the important vitamins and minerals that your body needs. You can end up feeling hungry and cheated, and you set yourself up for unhealthy, impulsive snacking later on in the day. The reason why Lindsey is famished shortly after her dinner is because she probably doesn't eat enough to compensate for the breakfast and lunch that she skips earlier.

cup grapes; 60 calories, 0 gram fat. Another tip: Peel a banana, cover it in plastic wrap, and place in a zipper-top freezer bag. Freeze and eat. Serving size: 1 medium banana; 105 calories, 0 gram fat.

2. Roast your veggies. Preheat your oven to 350°F. Spray a baking pan with olive oil. Chop

As a result, she turns those corn chips into a full-course meal.

To drop those 35 pounds, Lindsey needs to start eating breakfast and lunch on a daily basis. Pumping fuel into her body early in the day can help prevent her from bingeing on chips and other fattening fare late at night. Her breakfast can consist of cereal, fat-free milk, and fruit; half of a whole grain bagel with melted low-fat cheese on top; cottage cheese, fruit, and an English muffin with jelly; or a cup of yogurt, a banana, and a low-fat whole grain muffin.

For lunch, she can have a chicken, roast beef, or tuna sandwich; a small salad topped with fresh vegetables, beans, and low-fat dressing; or a bowl of vegetable soup, a piece of fruit, and some yogurt. If that's too much to eat in one sitting, she can save the fruit and yogurt for a mid-afternoon snack. She won't be as hungry, and she'll more than likely eat smaller portions at dinner.

If Lindsey still feels hungry a couple of hours later, she should identify the nutritious foods that she didn't get a chance to eat earlier. For instance, if she didn't meet her daily requirements for fruits and vegetables, that's what she should eat. If she didn't get enough dairy, she should have yogurt. If she still wants a snack after she has met her needs, she can choose a small serving of whatever she wants. But by that time, her snack will remain a snack. It won't turn into a meal.

Expert consulted

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some eggplant, bell peppers, onions, sweet potatoes, asparagus, mushrooms, and garlic and place them on the pan. Roast them for 15 minutes, turn them over, and cook for another 15 minutes, or until the vegetables are browned. Serving size: ½ cup; 25 to 100 calories, less than 1 gram fat. (Calorie and fat counts will be depen-

dent on the amount of oil and type and portion of vegetables used.)

3. Make your own chips. You'll need 24 fat-free, salt-free tortillas, garlic powder, cumin, chili powder, and olive oil spray. Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly coat the baking sheet with olive oil spray. Cut each tortilla into eight equal pieces and spread them over the baking sheet. Bake for 10 minutes, or until the chips curl and turn slightly brown. Remove from oven and spray lightly with cooking spray. Sprinkle with the seasonings suggested, or try your own combinations to find your favorite. Serving size: 8 chips; 67 calories, 1 to 2 grams fat.

4. Whip up a dip. Pour one 16-ounce can of no-salt, low-fat refried beans and 6 ounces of no-salt salsa into a bowl. Blend in the juice of one lime, 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro, and some minced fresh jalapeño chile peppers to taste (wear plastic gloves when handling). Mix well. Serving size: ½ cup; 134 calories, 2 grams fat. Beware of pickled jalapeños; they're loaded with sodium. This dip goes great with the chips above.

Note: No-salt refried beans can be a little difficult to find, but they're definitely worth the effort.

5. Savor some cereal bars. The low-fat versions of these fruit-filled snacks come in a wide variety of flavors. Serving size: 1 bar; 130 calories, 3 grams fat.

6. Blaze your own trail mix. Mix together three of your favorite low-fat, whole grain cereals in a large bowl. Look for bran or whole wheat cereals that contain at least 2 to 3 grams of fiber and less than 8 grams of sugar per serving.



TOP TIPS TIP

Planned Snacking Made Her Weight-Loss Program Work

A diet consisting of hamburgers, French fries, fried chicken, and high-fat snacks caused former substitute teacher Fran Condo Drozd of Litchfield, Arizona, to pile on an unhealthy 30 pounds that she struggled to lose for years. To get rid of her fat, she popped diet pills and tried every fad diet imaginable. The problem was that whenever she lost some weight, she regained it quickly—until she found a more permanent solution: regular exercise, low-fat meals, and lots of planned snacking.

She hasn't looked back since. Fran, 56, dropped those 30 pounds 17 years ago, and not one of them has returned. Her 20-year membership with TOPS and her plum position as their health and fitness spokesperson/ambassador has played a key role in her success. She offers women advice on how to keep weight off for good, and she even gives away these weight loss snacking secrets.

Carry a cooler. Pack a small plastic cooler with you wherever you go, in case you get hungry. Fill it with bagels, jam, apples, bananas, yogurt, and low-fat cheese sticks. You'll avoid stopping at fast-food restaurants, convenience stores, and vending machines.

Prepack your snacks. Select 10 of your favorite low-fat snacks and put 100 calories worth of each in separate plastic bags. Got the munchies? Just grab a bag and chow down. You'll always know exactly how much you're eating, and you'll never feel deprived. Some of Fran's bagged favorites include pretzels, Fig Newtons, low-fat popcorn, flavored rice cakes, low-fat trail mix, and prunes.

Serving size: 1 cup; approximately 100 calories, 1.5 grams fat.

7. Scream for ice cream. Low-fat, low-calorie ice cream, fat-free frozen yogurt, and sorbet are available in decadent flavors. Serving size: ½ cup; 130 calories, 0 to 5 grams fat. Frozen yogurt and fruit juice Popsi-

cles are terrific, too. Serving size: 1 bar; 40 to 100 calories, 0 to 1.5 grams fat.

8. Scoop some pudding. Try the low-fat and fat-free varieties in single-serving containers, available in assorted flavors. Serving size: 1 container (3.5 ounces); 100 calories, 0 gram fat. Also try fat-free instant pudding mix. Serving size: ½ cup; 90 calories, 0 gram fat.

9. Pack pretzels. Available in their regular, low-fat and fat-free varieties. Serving size: 1 ounce; 100 calories, 0 gram fat. Dip them in mustard or barbecue sauce.

10. Pop some corn. Choose the low-calorie, fat-free microwave varieties. Eat as many as 6 cups, and you'll still be under 150 calories. Serving size: 1 cup; 15 calories, 0 gram fat. Another option: Air-pop your own popcorn. Then lightly spray the popcorn with olive oil and sprinkle it with chili powder, garlic powder, onion powder, pepper, cinnamon, or fat-free Parmesan cheese.

11. Devour some yogurt. Choose low-fat or fat-free varieties. Average serving size: 6 to 8 ounces. Low-fat: 170 to 220 calories, 2 to 3.5 grams fat. Fat-free: 120 calories, 0 gram fat.

12. Feast on figs. Fat-free fig bars are available in cranberry, raspberry, and strawberry flavors. Serving size: 2 cookies; 100 calories, 0 gram fat.

13. Enjoy some veggies. Buy some precut, bagged, fresh vegetables that include broccoli, carrots, and cauliflower. Dip them in your favorite creamy, fat-free salad dressing. Serving size (veggies): ½ cup; 35 calories, 0 gram fat.

TOP 10 SUBSTITUTES

Looking for scrumptious low-calorie snacks that won't make you feel deprived? Here's a list of the top 10 snack alternatives to the fattening treats that will satisfy your sweet tooth—and help shrink your waistline.

Eat this . . .

1. ½ cup Häagen-Dazs fat-free frozen yogurt
Vanilla raspberry: 130 calories, 0 g fat
Chocolate sorbet: 120 calories, 0 g fat
2. ½ cup Edy's Coffee Fudge Sundae fat-free frozen yogurt: 100 calories, 0 g fat
3. 1 Weight Watchers Smart Ones Mocha Java Bar: 80 calories, 1.5 g fat
4. 4 oz Jell-O Fat-Free Pudding Snacks: 100 calories, 0 g fat
5. 1 oz (15 chips) Pringles fat-free potato chips: 70 calories, 0 g fat
6. 1 package (6 sandwiches) Nabisco Cheese Crackers with Cheddar Cheese: 200 calories, 11 g fat
7. 1 oz (6 chips) Tostitos WOW Restaurant-style: 90 calories, 1 g fat*
8. 1 oz (about 18 chips) Guiltless Gourmet Baked Organic Tortilla Chips (red corn, chili lime, blue corn, black bean): 110 calories, 2 g fat
9. 1 cup popped Orville Redenbacher's 94% Fat-free Butter Smart Pop: 15 calories, 0 g fat
10. 7 Quaker Crispy Mini Caramel Corn Cakes: 60 calories, 0 g fat

Instead of this . . .

- ½ cup Häagen-Dazs ice cream
Vanilla: 270 calories, 18 g fat
Chocolate: 270 calories, 18 g fat
- Edy's Grand Ice Cream Double Fudge Brownie: 170 calories, 9 g fat
- 1 Dove Bar: 260 calories, 17 g fat
- 4 oz Jell-O Pudding Snacks: 159 calories, 5.1 g fat
- 1 oz (14 chips) Pringles regular potato chips: 160 calories, 10 g fat
- 38 Snackwell's Zesty Cheese Snack Crackers: 130 calories, 3 g fat
- 1 oz. (7 chips) Tostitos Restaurant-style: 140 calories, 6 g fat
- 1 oz (12 chips) Doritos Tortilla Chips (nacho cheese, cool ranch, spicy nacho, smoky red BBQ, Baja picante): 140 calories, 7 g fat
- 1 cup popped Orville Redenbacher's Movie Theatre Butter Popcorn: 40 calories, 3.5 g fat
- ⅓ cup Crunch 'n' Munch Buttery Toffee Popcorn with Peanuts: 150 calories, 6 g fat

*Contains Olestra, which may cause abdominal cramping and loose stools. Olestra inhibits the absorption of some vitamins and other nutrients.

Serving size (dressing): 2 tablespoons; 35 to 50 calories, 0 gram fat.

14. Grab a bagel. It will fill you up and boost your energy. Serving size: ½ bagel; 105

calories, 0 gram fat. Slathering it with 1 tablespoon jelly adds 40 to 50 calories, 0 gram fat; 2 tablespoons fat-free cream cheese adds 30 calories, 0 gram fat.

15. Palm some fruit. Apples, peaches, pears, and oranges are great for grab-and-go snacks. Serving size: 1 piece; 100 calories or less, 0 to 0.7 gram fat.

16. Jiggle some gelatin. Naturally fat-free and available in several flavors. Serving size: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup; 80 calories, 0 gram fat. There's also sugar-free. Serving size: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup; 10 calories, 0 gram fat.

17. Munch on rice cakes. Rice cakes come in many flavors. Serving size: 5 fat-free mini cakes; 50 calories, 0 gram fat.

18. Bake an apple. Core and peel the top third of a large (9 ounces) baking apple. Spoon 2 tablespoons low-fat granola, 1 tablespoon brown sugar, and a dash of ground cinnamon into the apple. Drizzle with 1 tablespoon caramel flavor sundae topping. Cover and microwave for 3 minutes, or until the apple is

tender. Serving size: 1 apple; 245 calories, 3 grams fat.

19. Pass the taters. Slice an unpeeled, freshly scrubbed potato into thin wedges and place on a baking sheet spritzed with a cooking spray. Sprinkle the wedges with pepper and paprika and bake at 425° to 450°F for 15 minutes, or until done. Serving size: 1 potato with spices; about 230 calories, 0 gram fat.

20. Nosh on nachos. Preheat the oven to 325°F. Place 15 baked restaurant-size tortilla chips on a baking sheet lightly sprayed with a nonstick cooking oil. Top each chip with grated low-fat Cheddar cheese, fat-free bean dip, and salsa. Heat in the oven for 5 minutes, or until the cheese is melted and the dip and salsa are warm. Calories and fat will vary with the topping and chips used.