

The Best Healthy Snacks

By Michele C. Hollow [@michelechollow](#) | July 19, 2016



When you're on the go and don't have time for a full meal, here's what you need to take with you and what you should avoid.

Your meeting lasted longer than expected. Projects are due and your stomach is rumbling. Instead of grabbing a healthy lunch, you reach for a candy bar and keep working.

Now you feel dizzy and you're still hungry. "That's because your blood sugar levels dropped from not eating and then spiked from the sugar," Glenn Rich, MD, a board-certified endocrinologist and obesity specialist at [Fairfield County Medical Group](#). "That's why it's important to take a healthy snack with you when you're on the go."

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Rich also believes everyone should start their day with a healthy breakfast. "For days when you have to leave early, plan on making something ahead of time the night before," he said.

You can cook hard-boiled eggs in advance and eat them on the way to work if you're

running late. Protein shakes are easy to make, too. Rich suggests adding fresh berries and protein powder to plain Greek yogurt. Add skim, soy, coconut, or almond milk for a smoother consistency. Mix in a blender for a quick liquid breakfast. “This way, you’ll get the protein your body needs and the berries naturally add sweetness to the drink,” he said. “You can make it more fun and filling by adding crushed ice.”

You can put all of this (except the ice) in a blender the night before so it will be ready for you in the morning. Some blenders have to-go cups with lids. You can also purchase a hot and cold thermos to put your protein shake in.

If you’re concerned with staying fit, keeping the pounds off, or losing weight, Rich suggests carrying healthy snacks. “Look for protein bars with more than 20 grams of protein, less than 20 grams of carbs, and less than 200 calories in them,” he said. “A protein bar can occasionally replace a meal.”

Other snacks to keep on hand include roasted or raw nuts. Avoid ones that are too salty. Peanut butter is also a good choice. Just make sure the peanut butter you are buying — either chunky or smooth — is made only with peanuts and salt. “It’s a good way to get protein,” he said. “Protein is satisfying and proven to decrease hunger. It’s an excellent aid for weight loss. A handful of healthy nuts (walnuts, cashews, and almonds) is a delicious heart-healthy snack.”

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Portable fresh fruits are also good to keep on hand. Bananas, apples, pears, and cut up berries will curtail hunger. Sliced avocados drizzled with olive oil, pepper, and salt or cut celery and carrot sticks pair well with hummus. “You can add cheese, chickpeas, or lean meat to salads,” Rich said.

Cereals, such as bran flakes and oats, are low in sugar and can be packaged in small plastic containers. These high fiber cereals pair well with Greek yogurt, which is an excellent source of protein.

By planning ahead for those days when you know you can’t take time for lunch, you won’t make bad food choices. “When we skip meals and come home famished, we grab the first thing we see and tend to overeat,” Rich said.

The best healthy snacks are low in sugar and are minimally processed. Choose whole wheat or whole grain flours over white. You should also avoid diet foods that are made with artificial sweeteners.

“After a while, you’ll find you will lose your cravings for sugary high-carb foods,” Rich said. “I tell my patients that it’s also okay to have a treat once in a while.”

A few pieces of [dark chocolate](#), especially if it's more than 70 percent cocoa, is a [healthy snack](#). "I have it at night once in a while," Rich said. "Make it the exception rather than the rule."

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Reviewed By: *Janet O'Dell, RN*

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