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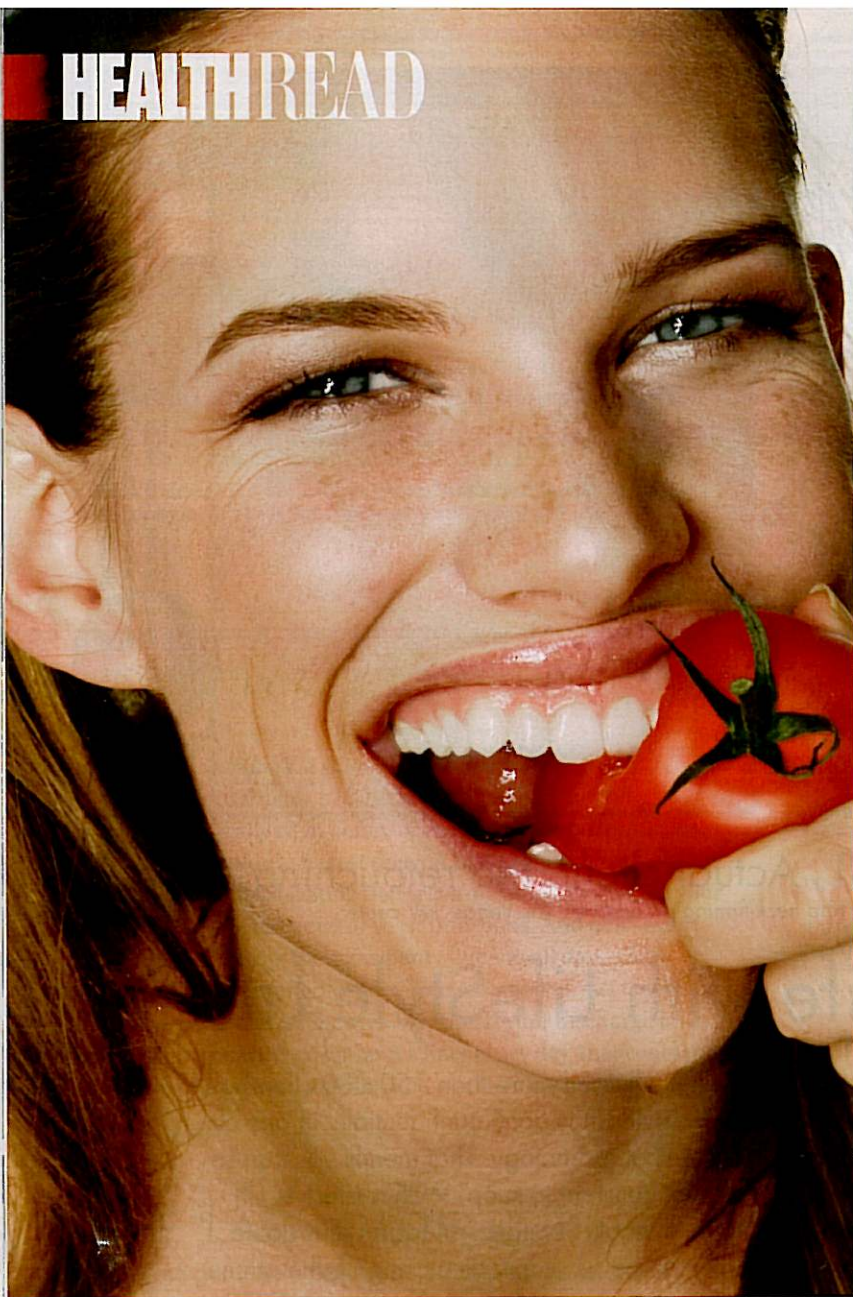
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6 ways to snack yourself skinny

We'll tell you exactly what—and when—to eat so you shrink your appetite, stoke your metabolism, and lose weight, easy. By Jessica Girdwain

If you're looking to shed a few pounds, you've probably vowed to give up snacking. After all, isn't that the secret of French women—who, we're told every five minutes, *don't get fat*? "When people are trying to lose weight, eating between meals is one of the first things they cut from their diet—but this is a big mistake," says *The Biggest Loser* nutritionist and registered dietitian Rachel Beller. Why? "Studies show that people who eat more frequently throughout the day weigh less than those who don't eat as often," explains Mark Hyman, M.D., an expert in nutritional medicine. Eating regularly keeps blood-sugar and energy levels steady, controls hunger, and prevents you from attacking the vending-machine Cheetos like a raccoon in the night. Plus, "when your body is busy burning the right food for fuel all day, your metabolism increases and you burn more calories," Hyman says. Besides the weight benefits, snackers tend to have a more

nutritious diet than three-squares types, a recent study found—possibly because they have more opportunities to sneak in servings of fruits and whole grains.

All that said, there are a few key rules to follow. "Snacking and grazing are *not* the same thing—if you pick all day, and choose the wrong foods, you're likely to gain weight, not lose," says Beller. Read on for your simple, blessedly un-French snack strategy.

RULE #1: ALWAYS HAVE AN AFTERNOON NIBBLE

You don't need a scientist to tell you that eating lunch at noon and dinner at 7 means you're going to be ravenous when you walk through your front door at night. "If you're running on empty when you get to the dinner table, it's easy to rationalize that you can eat whatever you want," Beller cautions. Not only that, but your food-starved body almost propels you into a binge. That's why the afternoon snack (around 3 or 4 p.m.) is a must, she



The perfect fiber-and-protein combo A whole-grain cracker with a Laughing Cow cheese wedge and cucumbers will keep you full.

says. That rule applies even when you're going out for a big meal. "It's tempting to 'save' your calories if you know you're having dinner at your favorite Italian restaurant," says Melina Jampolis, M.D., an internist who specializes in nutrition for weight loss and disease prevention. "But if you do, you'll be famished and eat too much too quickly." Snacking on something high-volume and low-calorie, like a fruit or veggie, before a rich meal can actually help you *cut*

calories. One study from Pennsylvania State University found that people who munched an apple 15 minutes before a meal ate 187 fewer calories later on.

As for a.m. snacks, if there's less than three or four hours between your breakfast and lunch, you probably don't need to have a mid-morning bite, Beller says: "This is one time of day when a lot of people eat out of habit, not hunger." Chances are, your desire for one of your cubemate's carrot-cake muffins (isn't it time she got a new job already?) has nothing to do with an empty stomach. If you really can't hold out till lunch, have something small, like a piece of fruit or sliced veggies, Beller suggests.

RULE #2: HAVE DESSERT OR A BEDTIME SNACK, NOT BOTH

"After dinner, you need to ask yourself: Do I want a small dessert or a snack before bed?" says Beller. "Pick one or the other, and make it your smallest treat of the day—no more than 120 calories." That's a low-fat fudge bar, a yogurt, or a square or two of dark chocolate. This is also the strategy that requires a dose of self-awareness: If you know that no matter what, you're the type who finds herself with her head in the refrigerator an hour before bed, looking for a "little something," then plan to have *that* nibble and pass on dessert.

RULE #3: GO FOR PROTEIN PLUS FIBER

Snacks that include some lean protein or healthy fats (like hummus or nuts) and some fiber (like baby carrots or whole-grain crackers) are ideal. Protein and fat trigger the release of hormones in the gut that keep you feeling satisfied for hours after you've stopped noshing. Protein also puts the brakes on the body's insulin pump—and high levels of insulin can lead to more tummy fat, not less. As for fiber,

it slows digestion, also key for feeling full. Adds Jampolis: Many high-fiber carbs, like fresh fruit, veggies, and oatmeal, are water-rich, which means you get to eat a bigger serving for fewer calories than you would if you chose junky carbs like cookies and chips. Those things are pretty much devoid of fiber, and they cram lots of calories into tiny, nutrient-scant portions. Eleven smart combos you can put into your snack rotation right now:

- a hard-boiled egg with a half cup of grapes
- a savory parfait made with two tablespoons of low-fat cottage cheese; a quarter of an avocado, pitted and sliced; and a tablespoon of raisins
- a packet of instant unsweetened oatmeal with cinnamon and chopped nuts
- hollowed-out zucchini halves topped with guacamole
- a low-fat Greek yogurt with a cup of your favorite berries
- a cup of baby carrots with two tablespoons of hummus
- Pure Bars (or another bar with 200 calories or fewer and at least 3 grams of fiber and 6 grams of protein)
- a cup of steamed in-the-pod edamame
- a half cup of high-fiber cereal with skim milk
- a 100-calorie pack of almonds and a kiwi
- a handful of whole-wheat crackers (like nutritionist-fave Wasa) topped with a Laughing Cow cheese wedge and cucumbers

RULE #4: SNACKS SHOULD BE 200 CALORIES OR LESS

A sane snack is between 100 and 150 calories in the morning and 150 and 200 calories in the afternoon. "I cringe when my patients tell me they had a 'handful' of nuts—they could easily be downing 300 calories, a small meal!" says Jampolis. For the record, nuts are terrific, because of their protein and healthy fats, but 150 calories equals just 21 almonds or 16 cashews. So if you're measuring by the handful, borrow a small child's palm. It's smart to portion out your servings of nuts—or anything else, really—*before* taking your first bite, or it's easy for the carton to become a trough. Research shows that we eat more out of bigger bags or boxes of snack foods because we don't know when to stop.

RULE #5: PACK A SNACK!

When you're on the go and start to feel hungry, the smells wafting from Dunkin' Donuts will lure you right in. And, sadly, a

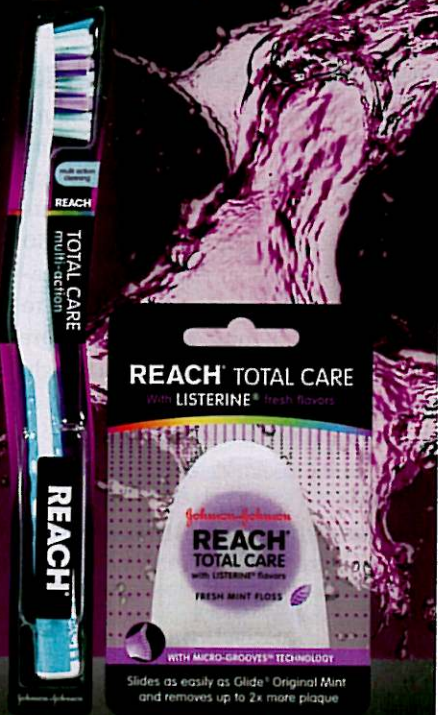
Zucchini boats Yes, guac can be a smart snack! Just keep it to two or three tablespoons, and scoop it with veggies instead of deep-fried chips.



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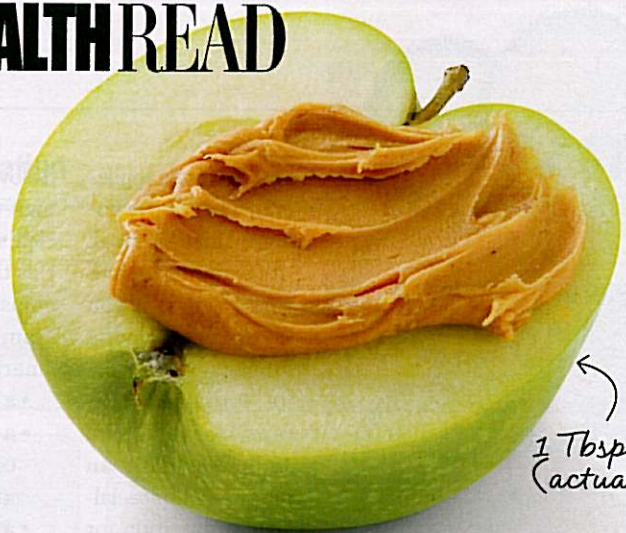
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HEALTHREAD



Important peanut butter visual!

This actual-size blob is the amount of peanut butter you should eat as a snack. Along with a small apple, it has protein, fat, and fiber, making it ideal—as long as you can stick to 1 level tablespoon. “It’s one snack food that really gets my clients into trouble: By scooping out way too much, licking the spoon, and going back in for another nibble, you could be eating much more than you think,” says dietitian Rachel Beller. But now you know better.

doughnut is not a snack. Since resistance is almost futile when you’re famished, stash some healthful options, like turkey jerky, nuts, oranges, and apples, in your handbag and your office drawers.

**RULE #6: DON'T S.W.D.
(SNACK WHILE DISTRACTED)**

We’ve all heard the advice of not eating our meals on the run, but we’ve come to think of snacking as something we’re permitted to do while we’re engaged in something else, our experts say. Ideally, snack time should be a small break in your day. In fact, chowing while catching up on Netflix could cause you to misjudge how much you ate, according to research in the journal *Applied Cognitive Psychology*. So instead of watching TV, answering emails, or listening

to a conference call while you snack, chat with someone, or just Zen out—and while you’re at it, try eating with your nondominant hand. One study from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles found that doing so forced people to slow down and focus on what they were eating, so they ate about 13 percent less. Another way to prevent snack amnesia is to choose foods that take effort to eat. Beller’s a fan of in-shell pistachios over the pre-shelled kind: One study found that when empty shells were left on the table, people ate 35 percent fewer calories, because the shell prevents you from plowing through the nuts and leaves evidence of what you just ate. Likewise for edamame and peelable fruit like tangerines. Now quit reading and go get a snack! 🍎

What smart snacking isn't: Finishing the bar nuts ● Picking a Tater Tot off your kid's plate ● Sneaking 15 tastes of what you're making for dinner while cooking ● Taking bites of ice cream out of the container at half-hour intervals all day ● Attacking the bread basket

ALISON GOOTEE/STUDIO D.