

The Nutritionist's Corner

Snack Attack!

It's no secret that classes, work, sports and other activities can all contribute to a hectic and exhausting schedule. In reality, you may never have a "9-5" workday in your entire college career. It may seem completely unreasonable to expect to eat three regular meals a day. You may find yourself skipping breakfast or lunch to save time, resulting in some serious hunger pangs that lead to an oversized dinner.

However, it is important to realize that healthy snacking throughout the day can help you stay energized and focused, and can curb your appetite to avoid overeating at your evening meal.

Think you don't need to snack? Take a look at these common myths, and maybe you'll change your mind

Myth #1: You only need to eat 3 main meals a day.

The Truth:

Feeling hungry throughout the day is not a bad thing—it's your body's way of telling you that it's starting to run out of gas (and remember, food is fuel to keep your engine running throughout the day). Expect to start to feel hungry about every three hours. For some of us, it's even sooner—which may mean you need to increase the calories you take in earlier in the day.

Myth #2: I'm too busy to fit snacks into my day.

The Truth:

One of the keys to healthy snacking is preparation. Taking five extra minutes in the morning or before you go to bed to put together some snacks for the day can save you from feeling tired and groggy from a drop in your blood sugar between meals.

Myth #3: Snack foods are usually potato chips and cookies.

The Truth:

Think of your snack as a smaller lunch. Just like your meals, try to fit at least two or three different food groups into your snacks. Have a glass of milk with a banana and peanut butter, or carrots and hummus

Myth #4: Eating after 7 PM makes you gain weight

The Truth:

Many people believe that the trick to maintaining a healthy weight is to stop eating after a certain time at night. The truth is, there is no "magic hour" when your body starts to turn everything into body fat. If you find yourself staying up late studying or pulling an all-nighter to cram for an exam, don't torture yourself by ignoring your growling stomach. Keep healthy snacks on hand to keep your focus and to maintain energy.

Looking for ideas?

Stock your dorm room or apartment with easy, portable snacks. These can include:

- Granola, almonds, and dried fruit
- Peanut butter and whole wheat bread
- Yogurt and cereal
- Cheese sticks
- Fresh fruit, like apples, bananas, and oranges
- Tortilla with low fat cheese

To get a better idea of your personal energy needs and personalized meal plans, visit www.mypyramid.gov.

