



# Avoid Snack Foods

**CHALLENGE**  
**Avoid unhealthy snack foods this month.**

## Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. On your monthly Health Challenge™ Calendar, record the number of days you don't eat snack foods.
2. Read "Want a snack?" and "Are you really hungry?" below.
3. To complete the Challenge, you must avoid unhealthy snack foods on at least 22 days this month.
4. Keep records of your completed Challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

## Want a snack?

What do you typically have for breakfast? If your answer is coffee and pastry, a bowl of sugary cereal, or sweetened yogurt and a bagel with cream cheese, you are probably hungry again at 10 a.m. You are then faced with a dilemma. Do you grab a bag of chips or a piece of candy to tide you over until lunch or "tough it out" until mealtime?



Most experts agree that it is best to fill up on nutritious, unrefined, high-fiber foods balanced with healthy fats and protein foods. Foods that convert to glucose (blood sugar) more slowly keep you satisfied longer. If you fill up on a bowl of oatmeal, a handful of nuts, and a piece of fruit for breakfast you might not need a mid-morning snack. But if you do, reach for a healthy snack, such as a whole-grain cracker spread with almond butter or hummus.

There's good data to show that healthy snacks can help in weight loss and control. When you go for several hours without food your blood sugar levels can drop, which often means you will overindulge at meal time. Eating nutritious foods when you are hungry and stopping when you are full keeps blood sugar levels more constant and can keep you from overeating. Just make sure you stay within your recommended calories for the day. That's easy to do when you focus on eating according to the most recent dietary guidelines, which recommend you "limit

the consumption of foods that contain refined grains, especially refined grain foods that contain solid fats, added sugars, and sodium."

Loosely translated, that means to eat less candy, cake, cookies, soft drinks, flavored coffee drinks, deep-fried foods, and salty snacks. These snack foods can lead to obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and more. Avoiding them will help you cut calories and keep from being hungry. Research shows that people get full by the volume of food they eat, not just the number of calories they take in.

## Are you really hungry?

Before you reach for a snack, make sure you're really hungry. To help you determine whether you snack because you are truly hungry or out of habit, keep a log for a few days to help you identify when you snack, what foods you snack on, and any emotion or situation that triggers snacking. Do you snack late at night, while stuck in traffic

jams, or when you hang out with snacking friends? Are you tired, stressed, or feeling lonely?

Do you find a particular candy or snack food irresistible? Do you feel shaky and light-headed?

Pay attention to your body's clues. Sometimes people misread thirst as hunger. When you first feel the need to munch, grab a tall glass of water or cup of tea. Stay away from soft drinks and sweet drinks. Researchers studied 548 school children for 2 school years, looking at various factors linked to the development of obesity. They found a strong link between intake of sugar-sweetened drinks and development of obesity.

Included in the study were soft drinks (primary source of sugar drinks), fruit punch, Kool-Aid, lemonade, and sweetened iced tea, but not 100% fruit juices. A 12-ounce can of soda contains 10 to 13 teaspoons of sugar and about 150 calories.

In the study, children who drank sugar-sweetened drinks consumed about 200 extra calories daily compared to children who didn't drink sugar-sweetened drinks. For every additional can or glass of sugar-sweetened drink consumed, the risk for obesity increased by 60% even after adjusting for other dietary habits and level of physical activity.

Snacking Log				
TIME	PLACE (work, car, bed, kitchen)	FOOD (chips, soft drink, apple, coffee drink)	CALORIES	CIRCUMSTANCE (angry, habit, tired, lonely, bored, social)
8:00 am	bus	M&Ms, 1 pkg.	250	hungry, skipped lunch

Use the log on page 3 to track your snacking habits

In the last 50 years, the intake of soft drinks has increased by over 500% and appears to be a major cause of obesity in children (and adults as well).

Calories that come from a drink are added so easily and quickly, the body just doesn't seem to monitor them properly.



## Mindless eating

Have you ever noticed that you eat more when eating in front of the TV or computer screen? Now we have research that documents this phenomenon. Researchers fed a group of 41 women a meal under 4 different conditions and then watched to see if their surroundings affected how much they ate:

- Eating alone in silence
- Eating alone listening to a recording about the meal's taste and texture
  - Eating alone listening to a recorded detective story
  - Eating together in groups of 4

When the women ate alone listening to the detective drama they ate

300 calories more than during the other 3 settings. If you always eat in front of the TV, your mind becomes conditioned so that anytime you watch TV you think you need to eat. Interestingly, eating in a group did not increase food intake. If you are having a hard time keeping your weight under control, you may want to avoid eating alone in front of the TV and try to make mealtime more social. Eating with the family or friends can provide quality contact time that provides additional health benefits.

## Stressed or tired

When you feel stressed or fatigued, lace up your walking shoes and head outdoors instead of reaching for a candy bar. A brisk 15-minute walk invigorates your mind and helps relax tense muscles and calm the body's stress response (which can stimulate appetite).

Get healthy snack ideas:  
[www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/tips/snacks.html](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/tips/snacks.html)

## "Because it's there"

Keeping a supply of snack foods in the kitchen pantry, your desk drawer, or the glove box of your car makes snacking easy. Consider cleaning out your stash of unhealthy snack foods. If you can't stand the idea of throwing them away, perhaps you can donate unopened packages to the local food bank or give them to neighbors. Another strategy is to immediately clear the table and put away leftovers. If you find yourself raiding the refrigerator for a midnight snack of leftovers, cook less food to eliminate leftovers.

## Boredom binging

Sometimes people eat because they're bored. "There's nothing to do – what's there to eat?" Keeping your body and mind active is a great anti-snacking strategy. Instead of snacking:

- Walk around the block
- Drink a glass of water
- Put a puzzle together
- Call a friend
- Bathe the dog
- Pet the cat
- Garden
- Lift weights
- Scrapbook
- Brush your teeth



## Bedtime snacking habit

Many people were raised with a bedtime snack – a little something to tide them over until morning. But the habit can contribute to acid reflux (heartburn) and weight gain. Before reaching for cookies or a bowl of ice cream, think first about why you want to eat. If you're really hungry, think about how many calories you have eaten that day. It is what and how much you eat and how much physical activity you do during the whole day that determines whether you gain, lose, or maintain your weight. If you are hungry, have a light snack, such as a piece of fruit or whole-grain toast.

## Healthy snacks

Eating 3 meals a day might not be enough for some people such as people who have blood sugar problems or are especially thin. Active children and teens – who are burning a lot of energy just because they're growing – might also need to eat more frequently.

If you find you really are hungry between meals, plan to eat 1 or 2 nutritious snacks between your 3 nutritious meals. Aim for snacks that are 100 calories or less. If they contain a bit of protein, fiber, and fat, along with some unrefined carbohydrate (e.g., a raw carrot), you'll be satisfied longer.

Some people find that eating small, healthy meals – spaced 3 or 4 hours apart – gives a more steady supply of calories and can keep energy and blood sugar at more consistent levels. Just be sure the foods you snack on are unrefined, high fiber, healthy fats, or high in protein and do not exceed 200 to 250 calories.



Get healthy recipes:  
[apps.nccdc.gov/dnparecipe/recipesearch.aspx](http://apps.nccdc.gov/dnparecipe/recipesearch.aspx)







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## Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Use this calendar to record the days you avoided unhealthy snack foods, your exercise program (min/day as well as type of exercise), weekly weight, and any other items you may want to track.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you avoided snack foods. To meet this challenge, you must avoid snack foods on at least 22 days this month. Then keep up this health practice for a lifetime of best health!
4. Keep this record for evidence of completion.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
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\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I avoided unhealthy snacks

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking

## Other wellness projects completed this month:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

