

12 ways TO SNACK FOR less than 600kJ

Snacking doesn't have to be fattening – try our healthy recharges that won't pile on the kilos, says CATHERINE SAXELBY

Snacking, like alcohol, has a good side and a bad side. It can be useful for many people but it also presents an opportunity for overeating – we all know how hard it is to stop at one biscuit or a handful of peanuts. And many snacks are loaded with sugar, fat and salt. On the other hand, studies have proven that a small indulgence is a welcome motivator for serious dieters, as well as a psychological tonic. If you know you can have one chocolate or a glass of wine, it stops those “why me” feelings of deprivation that often lead to a binge.

It is also possible to burn more fat and shrink your stomach size by switching to mini-meals with snacks. A 2003 study showed that people who eat smaller meals more frequently have almost half the incidence of obesity than people who eat less often. By spreading out the “food load” over small meals and snacks, people with diabetes can also keep blood sugar levels steadier.

Unfortunately, poor snack choice is one of the reasons we are gaining weight as a nation. Most popular snacks are more than just a quick bite – they're really a mini-meal. Take doughnuts – with 20g of fat and over 2000kJ (more than three times the kilojoules of our recommended snacks), two cinnamon doughnuts pile on one-third of the day's recommended fat and kilojoule intake for a sedentary woman. What's worse, most of this fat is saturated, the kind that clogs your arteries and thickens waistlines. Ditto for pastries, a bucket of hot chips or a thick slice of banana bread.

If you want to improve your snacking habits, check out our snacks under 600kJ – they won't break the kilojoule budget or blow your diet.

1 **A SLICE OF RAISIN TOAST WITH A SPREAD OF MARGARINE**
With a low-GI rating, this warming snack will help keep hunger pangs away until your next meal.

2 **25G PACKET OF POTATO CRISPS**
This is the smallest pack – the ones you buy in multi-packs to put in the kids' lunch boxes. It's half the size of what's on offer in vending machines.

3 **FUN SIZE MARS BAR**
If Mars Bars are your downfall, the Fun Size Mars Bar, at 25g in weight, will satisfy that chocolate craving without overdoing it.

4 **12 JELLY BABIES**
For those who like their sugar fix without the added fat, try the jelly babies with natural colours and flavours.

5 **19 RICE CRACKERS**
Count them out, then put away the packet. Once you start munching on these, it's often hard to stop.

6 **40G OF SULTANAS (ABOUT 100)**
Moderate in GI but high in fibre, sultanas make a convenient snack.

7 **20 ALMONDS OR 15 CASHEWS**
Rich in good unsaturated fats, 20g of any unsalted nuts a day makes a healthy snack and gives your heart a health bonus.

8 **25G PACK OF SMARTIES**
Lovers of Smarties should stick to the small pack.

9 **150G TUB OF FAT-FREE FRÜCHE**
A light and creamy snack that easily satisfies a craving for the full-fat version. Substitute with other fat-free dairy desserts.

10 **45G BANANA BREAD, NO SPREAD**
This weight is approximately one-third of the average cafe slice of banana bread, so share one piece with friends.

11 **300g FRESH FRUIT SALAD**
Light and fresh – the dietitian's choice. Using different fruits will affect the kiljoule count.

12 **1 1/3 TIM TAMS**
If you don't think you can put the remaining two-thirds back, then you should stick to just one.

