



ELITE

Personal Training and Fitness Solutions

HEALTH TOPIC OF THE WEEK

6/26 - Snacking



Introduction

Snacking is the new normal. This American eating behavior has grown by leaps and bounds over the last few decades. Consumers have become “grazers” who snack all day long instead of eating traditional structured meals.

Common reasons for snacking include hunger, thirst, stress, boredom, emotional problems like depression and anxiety, need for energy, convenience, flavor preferences and strong cravings, especially for things salty or sweet. Like all habits, snacking can be unhealthy or healthy, and snacks can range from junk food to nutritious alternatives. For example, there is a growing market for snacks that claim to help you stay calm, sleep, or focus through ingredients like vitamins, nootropics, mushrooms and adaptogens.

Research

Snack research (yes, there is such a thing) explores what consumers consider a snack as well as when and why snacking behavior occurs. The research definition of a snack is all-encompassing. Basically, any food or beverage can be considered a snack if it is eaten in between or in place of a meal. Here are just a few eye-opening statistics:



- 80% of food and beverage advertising goes to promote candy, sugary drinks and other calorie dense foods.
- Snacking is a multibillion-dollar industry. For example, Cheetos alone sells more than one billion in product per year.
- 62% of respondents in the United States stated that they snack once or twice a day.
- 40% of Americans admit they sometimes replace meals with snacks, especially for lunch.
- Snacking for kids now makes up almost one third of their daily caloric intake.
- Snacking escalated during COVID, especially with consumers under 35 years old.



Elite Personal Training and Fitness Solutions does not provide medical treatment or intervention. We acknowledge scientific evidence that appropriately intensive exercise and sustainable nutritional intervention can have significant impact on chronic health disorders and obesity, dramatically improving symptoms when recommendations are followed. Please visit us at Eliteptf.com for more information and to schedule your evaluation.

Pitfalls

- Excess calories and unwanted weight gain can occur due to portion size or frequency.
- Nutrients are lost if you skip meals or have reduced hunger at mealtimes.
- Hedonic (pleasure-related) properties of food, amplified flavors and appearance can send the appetite into overdrive and lead to food addictions.

What drives us to eat?

Appetite is our desire to eat. While hunger is a cue from our body, appetite is a cue from our brain. From a physiological standpoint, hunger and satiety (feeling full) are bodily reactions to changes in blood sugar. Hunger is a physiological need to eat based on elevated levels of the hormone ghrelin. The stomach secretes ghrelin when the body needs caloric energy.



In contrast, the gut-derived hormone leptin is secreted from adipose tissue (body fat) and acts as a satiety signal. This hormone helps your body maintain normal weight on a long-term basis. Short-term satiety signals can be activated through psychological factors like sensory stimuli (smell and taste) as well as mechanical swallowing and digestion.

Picture the snack food aisle. Products marketed as "snacks" are bite sized pieces and portions with bright colors, bold flavors and craveable tastes. They are directly targeted to drive appetite, but they only stimulate short-term satiety. Long-term satiety is a more complex physiological process beyond the scope of this article. Satiety and satiation are often used interchangeably in relation to appetite. Stay tuned for a future article that explores the difference.

EPT Pro Tips

If you find yourself falling into any of these destructive snacking, focus on the themes below. Remember that any changes you make should be sustainable or they will not work!

• Plan

- Failing to plan is planning to fail! We say this repeatedly. Make shopping lists. Do not shop or make snack selections when you're hungry or emotional. Prepare lunches and meals ahead of time. With structure, you will be less likely to deviate. You will also meet convenience needs by having your food planned out and prepared. Don't think of pre-planning as a pain in the neck. It's not. It's a gift you give yourself that makes life easier in the long run.



• Portion

- Start with portion control. Next, move to swapping for healthier options. For example: If you binge eat potato chips while watching football, first try having smaller portions of chips. Then try switching from chips to plain popcorn, fruit or your favorite cut veggies. You can add flavor by seasoning with delicious herbs and spices. Try blanching the veggies for brighter colors. Season with paprika, garlic, a small amount of honey and lemon, or even hot honey!



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- **Purpose**

- Snacks can serve a useful purpose, especially when it comes to exercise. Healthy snacks aid performance and recovery. Snacking on fruit before exercise helps maintain blood sugar and supports endurance. Drinking a shake with high quality protein after exercise assists muscle recovery. Digestion of proteins also aids in long-term satiety. Our Snack Shack offerings are carefully chosen for content and quality.



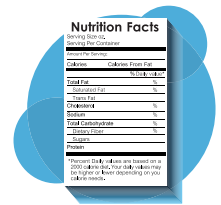
- **Processed**

- For processed snacks like bars and beverages, look for short lists and simple ingredients. Watch portion sizes. Some manufacturers manipulate portion sizes to mask the level of sugar and fat on the nutrition label.



- **Positive**

- Maintain a positive outlook about making gradual changes. You can do it! Incremental changes over time beats going cold turkey on those junk food favorites. Sustainability is key.



In summary, if you are a snacker, snack smart. In the gym, use snacks to boost nutrition and aid training. Snack simple. Healthy whole foods, fruits, veggies, and quality protein sources are better options than processed foods. For more questions on snacking or to discuss our Snack Shack selections, talk to our team!



This article was contributed by Lynette Jernigan B.S., ASCS, CFS, NASM-CPT & BCS, CFNP, CIMHP, Director of Nutrition Services and Client Advisory Board Chairman. For her bio, please see <https://www.elitepersonaltrainingandfitnesssolutions.com/lynette-jernigan>



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