

Webinar 2 Handout:

THE IMPORTANCE OF SNACKING & SNACKING RIGHT

Why is snacking important?

Long gone are the days of the 3 square meals. There is such good science behind eating smaller portions more frequently that it is rare to find someone who is wed to the old school thinking that snacks are “bad”. Snacking is super important for many reasons. Eating every few hours helps with weight management by preventing a cycle of being starving and then stuffing yourself -- it helps to keep you satisfied and it’s comforting to know you’ll be eating again in a little while, rather than having to wait hours and hours until the next meal. This can prevent what I call “fearful eating”, which is eating too much (even healthful foods!) for fear it will be awhile until you can eat again. Snacking also helps to stabilize blood sugar with a more continuous stream of fuel into your bloodstream. This helps to maintain energy, as it prevents peaks and crashes in blood sugar. There is also good science that speaks to snacking in the following areas:

- Prevention of disease and diabetes
- Improved skin
- Protection against aging
- Prevention of constipation
- Maintenance of mental acuity
- Promotion of happy and calm feelings

The science behind snacking

- **Snacking helps you make good choices and stay in control:** When you snack properly, you are also more likely to make better food choices throughout the day. Numerous studies have shown that eating every few hours stabilizes your blood sugar and keeps you from making less healthy choices later because you are starving. It makes sense to me that snacking maintains your metabolism. Some evidence suggests snacking does not help to keep your metabolism up; even if that is the case, there are so many other benefits to snacking!
- **Snacking improves satiety:** A study from a medical school in South Africa found that participants who were given breakfast in intervals throughout the morning were less hungry and ate less at lunch than those who ate breakfast in a single meal. Plus, the people who snacked felt just as satisfied as if they had eaten a high calorie lunch. Spacing calories makes sense -- it takes a few hours to digest a meal or a snack. Use this scientific information when you are teaching clients about the hunger quotient. Both overeating and under-eating can be triggers to mismanaging satiety cues.

- **A fourth meal can have benefits:** Studies also found that when French people, who customarily eat a fourth meal each day, gave up their afternoon snack they gained weight because they overate at other meals. Those who continued with their four meals per day had a better metabolic profile with a reduction in the secretion of insulin, an improvement in insulin resistance, and better glucose control. (So many Americans are struggling with diabetes or have family members who are managing this disease.) Snacking is extremely important for this population, as the majority benefit from weight loss and need to maintain their blood sugar through diet.
- **Snacking can downsize stomach capacity:** Snacking also shrinks people's stomachs. One study tracked obese people on a very low calorie diet for 4 weeks, and researchers found a reduction in stomach size that ranged from 27 to 36 percent. Thus, people who eat smaller, more frequent meals will begin to feel more satisfied with less food over time. This goes hand in hand with supporting the satiety research -- it makes sense that hunger and satiety hormones will be more sensitive in a more concentrated space.
- **Snacking can prevent that ravenous feeling:** People who naturally snack throughout the day when they are hungry make smarter food choices, according to a study by Arizona State University. I use this information all the time! Who hasn't experienced being so hungry that they eat the first thing they find, followed by everything in sight?! Most of us can avoid this experience by keeping a small snack on hand at all times. Ten almonds an hour before dinner may help your clients to order the grilled salmon, instead of the bacon burger!
- **Snacking is good for the ticker:** Research confirms that snacking helps heart health. One study compared two groups of people eating the same diet. The group who ate smaller, more frequent meals resulted in lower LDL cholesterol by 14% and total cholesterol by 9%. Use this study as convincing evidence for your clients who may have high cholesterol or family history of heart disease.
- **You can snack your way to happiness:** A study at the University of Wales showed that women who were given snacks reported being in a better mood, were sharper mentally, and performed better on a word-recall task. This makes total sense if you have ever seen a hungry child. Hungry children can be angry beings. They're often emotional and irrational. Put an apple slice in their mouths and you can almost watch their moods improve in a matter of seconds. Adults are no different, and the link between snacking and mood, depression and anger management is strong.

The pitfalls of snacking

Yes, you should be snacking regularly, but not all snacks are equal, and not all snacking intentions are sound. Most of us fall into traps of snacking and grazing without planning well. Snacks should be conscious, deliberate, mindful and satisfying. The benefits of snacks don't come from partaking in the jelly bean jar on your colleague's desk. Here are some common pitfalls that should be identified and addressed when educating clients:

- **Mindless eating:** Snacking because of boredom, stress, procrastinating or feelings of being unsatisfied are big triggers for many of us. Teach your clients to be mindful of the snacks themselves as well as the reasons behind why they are eating them and how they feel when eating them. Most of us cannot afford to snack on nutrient poor foods, and these foods just perpetuate the cycle of crashing and craving. Identifying this is the first step in making more healthful decisions.
- **Eating “snack foods” and not real foods:** Seemingly harmless foods such as pretzels, chips, or crackers are full of nutrient poor, empty calories that will leave you hungry again before you know it. Choose real foods that are nutrient dense (seeds, nuts, fruits, vegetables, and protein) to keep you satisfied and slim.
- **Ignoring your HQ:** Your hunger quotient should be between slightly satisfied and slightly hungry at all times. This will keep you in touch with your inner hunger and can prevent mindless, emotional eating. If you know you will be unable to eat at your regular snack time, consider having half your snack earlier.
- **Holding out for your next meal:** Skipping a snack disrupts blood sugar levels which almost always results in overeating at the next meal. Do not skip your snack if you feel hungry because you know lunch is in an hour! That will just trigger overeating and poorer choices later in the day. It's important to keep blood sugar levels consistent all day long.

Snacking right

The key to a great snack is getting the right balance of carbohydrates, protein and good fats and of course portion control. The perfect snack should include some produce, fiber and a little fat or protein (around 5 grams, to help keep you satisfied). I generally shoot for snacks that are under 200 calories for men and 150 for women -- you need these calories to work as a snack. A handful of celery, popcorn or pretzels just won't work! A balance of macronutrients will help provide satiety and give you energy until your next meal.

Sample snacks

- 2 artichoke hearts with 2 teaspoons olive oil and lemon
- 4 ounces plain Greek yogurt with a spoonful of chia seeds and 10 blueberries
- 1 slice of large tomato with one slice of fresh mozzarella and basil leaf
- 2 teaspoons natural peanut butter with celery sticks
- 1 cucumber peeled and sliced with 1/4 avocado (cut into pieces) and mixed with 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 ounces smoked turkey smeared with 1 teaspoon chopped olives and rolled up in 1 piece romaine lettuce
- 10 walnuts and 3 dried apricots
- 1 tablespoon hummus and baby carrots

Snacking on-the-go

- You should always have snacks stashed wherever you spend the most time and in the bags you use most often. Keep a serving of nuts in your purse. Have individual packets of oatmeal in your desk drawer. Make a spot in your glovebox for a Kind bar. If you know you are going to be out and about, be prepared with pre-packed snacks! Having something on hand is the first step to success.
- Pack snacks in your lunch. You already pull together a salad or tupperware your dinner leftovers, so pack a couple of easy to pull-off snacks as well.
- Invest in containers. It is helpful to invest in some small (BPA free) containers so you can easily take snacks with you.
- Don't be fooled by packaged snack foods -- even if the label looks healthy. When you don't have a snack with you it's perfectly fine to stop in a store and buy something, but choose whole ingredient snacks, such as fruit or veggies and seeds or nuts. Be leery of multi-ingredient packaged snack foods, such as bars, cookies, mixes and crackers as they are usually less healthful.

Figuring out when and where snacking fits into your clients' lives is as important as the three squares that they're already comfortable with. Keep in mind that most of us get hungry every three to four hours, so look closely at where clients may be stretching it between meals and plug in a beautifully planned, portioned and satisfying snack to keep clients living their most Nutritious Lives!