

# DIABETES AWARE



## Information Sheet 6c – Diabetes and Diet 4

### Diabetes and Diet 4

#### Snack Attack

Snacks are a great way to fill up on nutrients and keep you going between meals - BUT, don't just reach for the crisps!

It might be a banana for your elevenses, or a chocolate biscuit to pick you up mid-afternoon. A missed breakfast, or a lunch that lacks the 'feel full' factor, is likely to send most people in search of something to nibble between meals.

But snacking is not just about being hungry. It might be part of your daily routine. Boredom may lead you to look for a tasty distraction, or you might snack to be sociable - such as eating cake at an office birthday party. With endless opportunities to snack and countless foods on offer, we show you how to make healthy snacking, easy snacking.

A snack can keep you going between mealtimes and small bites are good for people who simply can't manage large meals - such as older people and those recovering from an illness.

Young children often find it difficult to eat large amounts of food, so to make sure they have enough energy and nutrients, it may be easier to provide mini-meals and snacks instead of forcing adult portions at mealtimes.

But nibbles between meals can turn into unplanned and unintended feasts, in terms of excess fat, salt and sugar intakes. So it's important that snacking is sensible and balanced by less at mealtimes or by more exercise.

Increased snacking can also affect your dental health because many snacks contain refined carbohydrates (sugars). Eating sugary snacks leads to more frequent production of acid by bacteria on the surface of your teeth - which is linked to the development of dental caries.

But many snack foods are a healthy way to fill up on nutrients. With some planning and label-reading, you can always be armed with tasty snacks to stop your stomach growling!

#### What's in a Snack?

On a cold day, hot soup is a perfect snack. Choose soups with vegetables or pulses - these will contain fibre and vitamins. Carrot or tomato soup are both excellent ways to boost your intake of antioxidant carotenes. Some shop-bought soups may contain lots of salt or fat, so making your own can be a healthier option.

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### **Lunchbox favourites**

Sandwiches are quick and easy - but watch the fillings if this is to be a snack and not a main meal. Lower-fat options are tuna, chicken, lean meat or low-fat cheese.

Mayonnaise dressings, and 'deep-fill' portions of bacon, sausage or full-fat cheese will all increase fat and calorie counts - Go for wholemeal bread and add extra salad to increase the fibre and vitamin count of your sandwich.

### **Better for bones**

Dairy foods are all rich in calcium, a nutrient that helps the growth and development of strong bones in kids and teenagers. Dairy foods come in many varieties, flavours and fat-levels, so remember to check the label to see what you're getting - many yogurts and fromage frais desserts are virtually fat-free, or you could try low-fat rice pudding.

Skimmed milk contains half the calories, but all the protein and calcium, of whole milk: try a 'skinny' hot chocolate or latte instead of the usual full-fat version.

### **Fruit: five-a-day, any way**

Fruit is full of vitamins and fibre, together with other potentially beneficial components.

We could all do with eating more fruit, so try a variety and make 'in-season' changes to keep up your interest. Bananas too boring? Eat them chopped and frozen. Nothing in the fruit bowl? Tinned fruit offers all the taste and nearly all the nutrients of fresh: choose varieties canned in their own juice rather than in syrup.

### **Veggie feasts**

Most people don't eat enough vegetables, but its so easy to up your intake. Many are now available in baby varieties, all offering tasty ready-to-eat nibble opportunities, so pop a selection into lunchboxes for school or work. Cherry tomatoes are fresh and sweet. Carrots and celery sticks are the classic dippers - try yogurt dip, humous or tomato salsa.

### **Something sweet**

Dried fruit is a good way to get a sensation of sweetness, and a handful of dried fruit is great if you're on the go. But its a very concentrated source of carbohydrate and often sticks to teeth, so it can be a dental caries risk. Dried fruit is best eaten with other foods, such as breakfast cereals.

A small chunk of dark chocolate offers a sweet snack, but beware of eating the whole bar; the fat content of all chocolate is high. Dark chocolate contains antioxidants, but its not known whether these benefit your health

### **Tea-dippers**

All biscuits contain the same basic ingredients: flour, fat and sugar. Most also contain a few other ingredients to add taste such as dried fruit, spices, chocolate, jam, flavoured 'cream' pastes, or toffee. Sticking to a 'not-more-than-one-biscuit-per-mug-of-tea' rule is a helpful way to enjoy a treat in moderation. Shortbread, chocolate chip or chocolate-

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coated biscuits and cream-filled sandwich or wafer biscuits are highest in saturated fat, and may contain hydrogenated fats or oils. Plain biscuits such as ginger nuts, Garibaldi's, fig rolls or sponge fingers are often a better option as they're lower in fat. But check the label for unexpected ingredients such as salt and hydrogenated fats.

### **Cake break**

Not all cakes are packed full of fat, and covered in sugary icing. Currant buns, teacakes, fruit scones, hot cross buns or a slice of malt loaf all contain less than 10 per cent fat. And a very thin layer of jam or low-fat fromage frais can help moisten these cakes.

### **A mouthful of crunch**

Sometimes, crispy, crackly, crunchy snacks appeal. Try plain popcorn, which is a low-fat choice, and add seasonings such as cinnamon, paprika or garlic powder. Or try sesame-seed rice cakes and Italian style bread sticks (grissini).

Plain nuts, without a salt or sugar coating, are a very healthy snack. But nuts are high in calories, so go easy if you're trying to lose weight. They contain a lot of fat, but most of this is unsaturated, which is better for you than saturated fat. Nuts are also a rich source of many nutrients, including potassium, fibre and vitamin E. Brazil nuts are a rich source of selenium, a micronutrient often inadequate in the British diet.

Peeling off monkey nut shells can make nut eating a fun activity for kids, but take care that younger children don't choke. Trail mix - plain nuts, seeds and dried fruit - is also healthy, but bear in mind that it's high in fat and calories.

### **Bring on the bread**

There are many styles of bread and nearly all are healthy lower-fat foods. In fact, many breads contain whole-grains and have added seeds and other healthy ingredients. Manufacturers reduced the amount of salt in bread by up to 21 per cent, between 1998 and 2001.

Explore bagels, rye breads, wraps, crispbreads, tortillas or pitta bread for inspiration. Some breads are higher in fat, but these are often moist enough to eat without a topping or filling, such as Italian focaccia or Indian naan bread.

*Snack Attack taken from Which? Online*