



Week 15: Mindset - How to Snack Right (finally!)

Overview

To snack or not to snack?! The debate about whether snacking is good or bad for your waistline and overall health is super confusing. Is it best to eat only 3 meals a day? Or is it better to eat every 4 hours?

This week you are going to learn how to snack right (finally!) for optimum Nourishment & Satisfaction. We will answer some common snack related questions such as: Is it healthy to snack? How often should you snack? What makes a good snack? (does it have to have protein?) Do calories matter when it comes to snacking? (and if so how many?) How to deal with cravings & avoid grazing all day? How to distinguish between true hunger & cravings? And what are the best (& worst) ways to snack?!

Best of all, we are going to show you how you can already answer all of these questions using the 3 Homemade Foundational Principles: COOK your own food, EAT whole natural ingredients, and LISTEN to your hunger. This is a sure fire system that you can apply in any situation without remembering complicated rules or tracking calories (and that's why it's the best!).

Is it healthy to snack?

Yes! The Homemade philosophy teaches you that it is always ok to eat when you are truly hungry (amend to that!) and this includes snacking.

You achieve this by learning to LISTEN to your body, including your hunger and satiety signals. The goal is to eat for Nourishment & Satisfaction - and snacks can provide both. If you allow yourself to get too hungry, and your blood sugars drop too much, your brain will send signals to you to eat carbohydrates, fats and sugars *asap* (which can easily turn into bad meal choices or bingeing). You can avoid this with a healthy snacking routine.

How often should you snack?

There is no set frequency that you must follow when it comes to snacking. Instead, you should apply the third Homemade Principle: LISTEN to your body. What this means, is simply checking in with yourself to **honestly determine whether you are truly hungry**. If so, then have a good snack - don't go hungry! (see below for snacking guidance)

As a general rule, however, you can expect to snack about 3-4 hours after your last meal. For *most* people it also works to have 2 snacks per day (less is also fine). The two snacks are normally a mid morning snack (after breakfast & before lunch) and an afternoon snack (after lunch and before dinner). This does not mean this is what you should do - you need to experiment and see what works best for you.

Furthermore, the number, timing and size of snacks you eat may vary from day to day and week to week based on various lifestyle factors (such as your previous meals & exercise / activity level). Again, just apply Homemade Principle 3 (LISTEN to your body) and you will achieve the right balance for your individual needs over time.

If you are truly hungry and eating more often than every 3-4 hours, then the reason is probably that your main meals are too small or low in calories - so boost them up.

How many calories should a snack be?

In many diets and weight loss apps you are instructed that a snack should be no more than 100 or 200 calories. **We are going to tell you to throw this advice out the window!**

Here's why it is misinformed to count calories when it comes to snacking:

1. Counting calories (or points aka Weight Watchers) says nothing about the QUALITY of the food you are eating:

This is probably the most important point. You cannot continue to eat poor quality food and achieve your health and fitness goals in the long term simply by

reducing portion sizes or counting points or calories. This is because those foods break down your systems of hunger and satiety regulation so you must rely on willpower to control how much you eat. As you know from personal experience, this only lasts for so long before the chemical signals urging you to eat more win.

2. **You may need more calories due to your weight or height:**

If you are tall or carrying a lot of weight then 100 or 200 calories for a snack may be nowhere near enough for what your body needs to function and feel satiated. Reducing your calories dramatically puts your body into starvation mode and shuts down your metabolism. This is not a sustainable or easy way to try to lose weight or get healthy.

3. **You may need more calories due to your activity level:**

If you work in an active job or exercise a lot you will need more calories for your snack to fuel your body.

4. **You may need more calories if your last meal was small:**

If your last meal or several meals were smaller than usual then you may need a bigger snack than usual - and this is perfectly fine. This is real life - it varies, and you need an eating philosophy that can change according to your day to day needs.

5. **Have you seen 100 - 200 calories? It is not a lot of food!**

So what is the correct approach to determining how many calories your snack should be? Simple: Apply the Homemade Principles: COOK your own snacks, EAT whole natural snacks and most importantly: LISTEN to your body.

Before you begin snacking check in with yourself and see how hungry you are. Try to stop eating when you feel satisfied but not full or bloated. Be aware of the calorie density or richness of the food you are eating - it takes 20 minutes for the body to register satiety. So if you are eating something that is rich (like nuts, homemade granola, or a homemade energy bar) then take your time, eat less than you think you will need and then see how you feel in 20 minutes. Over time, you will learn exactly how much to eat so you satisfy your hunger but don't feel too full or overdo it.

How to beat cravings?

Giving in to cravings is not good snacking. Most cravings are for refined sugars, carbs, processed foods and fatty fast foods. Eating these foods not only causes weight gain, but it also breaks down your systems of hunger and satiety control over time, and puts you at risk for chronic diseases - like high blood pressure, high blood sugars & high blood cholesterol.

Try this instead:

1. Learn to distinguish between true hunger and cravings when you are **LISTENING** to your body. Here is a great test:

- a. If you **desire a particular unhealthy food** and your mind is fixated on it (e.g. ice cream, pizza etc), then it is **probably a craving**.
- b. Whereas, if you **desire food generally** (and would happily eat an apple or plain bowl of rice) then it is **true hunger**.

2. Identify your 'Trip Hazards' by completing this sentence:

"When [this happens] I feel [insert emotion] and it causes me to crave [insert foods]"

Cravings are normally driven by boredom, stress, tiredness, habit or emotions so you need to check in with yourself and see what is really driving your eating. Over time, you will discover that there are about 4-5 common, repeated 'trip hazards' in your life - these are predictable situations which cause certain emotions in you, and lead you to have cravings for unhealthy foods (and often result in binge eating). For example, a 'Trip Hazard' could be left-over food in the staff kitchen when you are stressed at work, it could be a bad weigh in - which causes you to feel bad and crave something unhealthy, it could be a fight with your partner or boss, which makes you want to reach for the chocolate. So identify your specific trip hazards for unhealthy cravings.

3. Once you have identified 3-4 very specific Trip Hazards, then the next step is to replace your standard behavior (i.e. giving in to your cravings) with a new behavior.

Brainstorm some ideas and come up with a very specific action you will take next time your Trip Hazard arises. For example:

“Next time my boss makes unreasonable demands and I become stressed and start heading for the staff kitchen I will instead: take a walk around the block or call my Mom instead or sit and meditate for 1 minute instead.”

It doesn't really matter what it is. The point is just that the Trip Hazard and new behavior must be very specific.

If your new behavior doesn't work the first few time, don't worry! Just notice that you got 'tripped up' again, and know that you don't need to keep getting tripped up - because you are smarter than that! Then try again and again and again - until you get a small win! Or a big win! Eventually you will stop getting tripped up and you will have found a new habit or behavior pathway - and literally re-wired your brain to take the new action. This is a FACT based on neuroscience & cognitive behavioral therapy - which means the new behavior will become easier and easier and eventually become the 'new habit'!! Studies have also shown that having very specific plans formulated in advance is the most effective way to kick addictive behaviors.

**Note: Keep experimenting with new behaviors until you find the ones that work for YOU! For example, if a walk around the block doesn't work then try something else... make a cup of soothing herbal tea... or go make a Homemade Smoothie, or whatever.*

How to stop grazing all day?

If you find yourself snacking throughout the day or night... even on 'healthy foods'... then this is grazing and not good snacking. Firstly, the amount of calories you can consume by grazing all day on empty calories - is HUGE! It can dwarf your efforts to 'eat well' for a week or even a month. Secondly, the practice of grazing on any foods all day long - even healthy ones - actually breaks down your systems of hunger and satiety control over time. As we have already discussed, this causes you to gain weight, have constant cravings and to have a high risk for developing chronic disease - a bad combination! Finally it is not even satisfying... because it is mostly mindless grazing.

Try this instead:

There are really only 2 reasons for grazing: The first is the same as cravings (boredom, habit, emotions, stress). If this is you, then follow the advice in the cravings section above.

The second reason is that you are not eating for Nourishment & Satisfaction in the first place, which means your body is not properly nourished in the first place, and also is not satisfied. Generally this occurs because you are living the 'dieting mentality' and depriving yourself of proper meals! Start living the Homemade Philosophy and providing yourself with proper abundant, healthy, delicious meals you prepare - and you will see the urge to graze diminishing. One day you will realize you just don't need to graze anymore because it doesn't 'add' anything - and you prefer to wait until your next meal and work up a bit of a hunger so you can really enjoy it!!

How to overcome Mindless Snacking?

Most of us snack mindlessly and this is bad snacking! Here are some of the worst ways to snack mindlessly: While you are driving, while you are walking, sitting behind a computer, talking on the phone or watching TV. Studies have shown that eating absent mindedly increases the amount of calories you consume by a lot (without you really even noticing) and worst of all, eating mindlessly means you miss out on the Satisfaction part of eating... meaning you want to keep eating & eating.

Try this instead:

Try mindful snacking. Simply stop what you are doing, take a few deep breaths, think about the journey the food took to reach you - from the sunshine, water and earth which grew it, to the people who labored on the land, to your kitchen where it was prepared with love. Think about how lucky you are to have access to high quality food, when so many people in the world don't. Finally, imagine the nutrients in the food being integrated into your body and filling you with vitality, energy & healing properties. Now, really savor every bite and see how satiated you are.

What makes a good (or bad) snack?

It's simple! Just follow the Homemade Principles:

COOK or prepare your own snacks wherever possible

EAT whole natural snacks close to their natural state

LISTEN to your body, and snack mindfully.

Here's a table with some practical scenarios & questions!

Snack	Good... or bad?	Why?	The Homemade better choice?
Protein bar	Bad	Your snacks don't actually need to contain protein - this is a myth (no one is actually deficient in protein!) A protein bar is basically a candy bar masquerading as health food.	Hard boiled eggs or A Homemade bar
Salted roasted peanuts or other nuts	Bad	The commercially sold roasted nuts have added oils and salts - which means they are possibly bad for blood pressure - and are designed to be more-ish! This means you are likely to eat many more calories than you actually need to satisfy your hunger.	A handful of plain unsalted almonds, walnuts, or any other nuts.
Pop chips (baked not fried) or vegetable chips	Bad	Folks! This is all junk food! Don't be fooled by advertising - it is all processed with tons of carbs, added fats & salt. There is no nutrition left in these foods - and they are more-ish too meaning you are going to eat too many no matter what your intentions!	Mary's Crackers are amazing when you want some crunch and genuinely tasty! Feel free to add some dip or cheese.
Diet coke	Bad	The artificial sweeteners may damage your systems of satiety regulation and cause your body to crave something sweet later. They also prime your palate to like very sweet things. Finally, there is no nourishment in a diet coke.	Homemade Smoothie or 1-2 pieces of fruit
Granola or granola bar	Bad	More food industry trip hazards. No matter how 'healthy', 'natural' 'low fat' or 'no added sugars' the label claims... store bought granolas and bars are basically candy. They are always high in sugars of some form and often fats (and salt) too!	Homemade Granola, A Homemade Bar, Chia Seed Pudding, Oatmeal

Flavored yoghurts	Bad	Flavored yoghurts train your palate to crave sweet things - and are either high in sugars or artificial sugars - so have the same issues as diet coke or granola.	Plain yoghurt with some fresh berries and a drizzle of honey if needed
Frappucino	Bad	A frappucino is like a meal in a drink. If you are going to run a marathon, then maybe consider a frappucino to keep you going for the race (joking!) In all seriousness, these have a ton of added sugars, calories and often fat.	Homemade Mocha Smoothie or a regular coffee
A Jamba Juice or Smoothie	Bad	These commercially available juices and smoothies often have added sorbets or very large amounts of nut butters or simply fruit juices - with none of the fiber. This means it is going to peak your blood sugars & pack a massive punch to your calorie count for the day, without really filling you up for very long.	Homemade Smoothie or 1-2 pieces of fruit
A bagel with cream cheese or a PB&J sandwich on white bread	Bad	These are 'snacks' which have the calorie, carbs, fat content and sugars of a meal - without the Nourishment! The big problem with these meals is that they add no nutrition to your body and contain refined carbs and sugars meaning they raise your blood sugars - and then set you up for a CRASH! (aka hunger cravings)	Homemade Hummus or Guac served with vegetable sticks or whole grain crackers. Or try a piece of fruit with a tablespoon of nut butter.
Fast food, fried food, candy, cakes, donuts	Very bad	You already know why! These foods are all high in fats, empty calories, sugars, salt, and don't provide any nutrition. They are also designed to make you overeat and they break down your systems of hunger & satiety regulation over time.	Homemade Snacks...see our recipes for this week!