



Ontario

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HOW'S YOUR SNACK SENSE

Unlike the old song, good snacking doesn't always come naturally; yet the habit has almost become an automatic reaction in today's busy life. That is why it is important to stop and examine the effects of snacking on your own health and the health of your family. Do you know whether your habit is good or bad?

For many of us, eating between meals satisfies two needs; hunger (real or imagined) and diversion. Nibbling and munching have become synonymous with enjoyment. For young people, snacking is universal, at home, at school and at play.

Some nutritionists believe it is wise to spread the food you eat throughout the day. They advocate, especially for older people with poor appetites, five or six small meals each day, instead of the usual three larger ones. Meals eaten more often provide a continuous supply of energy and nutrients without overloading the digestive system at any one time. Snacks may be very useful for those who have poor appetites, or for those who are weight conscious, if the foods taken are low in calories.

When is a snack considered good? When it —

- looks and tastes good, with eye appeal
- is easy-to-eat and prepare
- satisfies hunger without leaving a person feeling stuffed
- is low in sugar and salt
- is packed with good nutrition

Lifetime eating habits develop in childhood. If you still have children at home, make sure they get off to a good start by encouraging them to enjoy the natural taste of nutritious foods. Don't tempt their taste buds with overly

sweetened, highly salted or artificially flavored snack foods. Ontario produces an abundance of wonderful foods. Start your children off in the right direction by using Ontario products.

We all know about, and many have experienced, the middle-aged spread. Are you fighting the battle of the bulge? Canadians are often overweight; some, indeed, to the extent that diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease are just around the corner, if they haven't already arrived. In most cases, these diseases are the direct result of bad eating habits, of which unwise between-meal snacking is one of the worst.

Snacking is bad if, as frequently happens, it causes tooth decay. Although most damage occurs during the more cavity-prone years of growth and development, tooth decay can strike at any age. Unfortunately, once the damage is done, its effects stay with one for one's entire life. Poor eating habits, including the frequent use of sweets between meals and before bed time, are especially harmful.

Sugar is often called the cavity culprit by dentists. The decay effect of foods containing sugar is dependent on a combination of —

- frequency of intake
- stickiness of food
- total sugar content of the food.

Research has shown that the frequency of sugar intake is far more important in causing cavities than the amount eaten at one time. Each time the tooth surface is exposed to sweets, acid which is harmful to the tooth is produced for 20-30 minutes. Highly retentive or sticky forms of sugar are more damaging than solid sweets. These sticky products cling to the teeth, giving bacteria more time to produce the acids which attack the tooth enamel.

The chart below separates foods into the four food groups, according to Canada's Food Guide. Some foods are good for snacks, others are better with meals.

	Good Snacks (when eaten without adding sugar)	Better with Meals*
Milk Group	milk, whole, 2%, skim or buttermilk; all cheese including cottage cheese; plain yogurt; some dips and spreads (see label); soups	chocolate milk & drinks; malts; shakes; ice cream; sweet or fruited yogurt; puddings & custards
Meat Group	meats of all kinds including luncheon meats & leftovers; nuts of all kinds sunflower & pumpkin seeds; hard cooked eggs; smoked meats; some bean dips and peanut butters (see label); egg nog	some meats prepared with sugars (see label); candycoated nuts
Fruit & Vegetable Group	all raw, fresh, frozen or waterpack fruits or vegetables or their juices prepared without addition of sugar (see label)	sweetened canned goods, juices or drinks; dried fruits, e.g. raisins
Bread & Cereal Group	popcorn, pizza, cheese popcorn	breads and cereals of all kinds; crackers; potato chips; pretzels, caramel corn; all sweet baked goods (cake, cookies, etc.)

*The slow or continual sipping, chewing, sucking or nibbling of these items makes them especially hazardous to dental health.

For those of you who didn't attend the Home Economics Branch Calorie Countdown Food Forum in your county or district, here is a tasty snack recipe.