

Munchies with merit

Dump the potato chips and satisfy your urges with nutritious snacks. Your body will appreciate it

by Michele Blanchet

Let's face it; junk food is convenient, tasty, and addictive. While appealing, the consequences of overindulging in it are serious and can make you sick. Junk foods laden with high sugar, fat, salt, and preservatives are high in calories and low in nutrients. They decrease your appetite for regular meals, cause swings in energy levels, and leave you feeling blah.

It's well known that individuals with HIV need to optimize their nutritional intake, stay within a healthy weight range, and be proactive with their general overall health. Being overweight increases your risk for health problems such as heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Snacks that are abundant in vitamins and minerals can fill in your nutritional gaps, help you maintain a healthy body weight, preserve lean body mass, and optimize your nutritional health status. The added bonus: it gives you a boost of energy, combats fatigue, tension, and mood swings, and helps prevent hunger and cravings for junk food.

Set yourself up for success

In order to keep on track with healthy snacking, plan ahead:

- ▶ Add healthy snacks to your grocery list.
- ▶ Plan for healthy snacks during the day; you're less likely to overeat at meals and reach for something that isn't healthy.
- ▶ Designate a highly visible location in your kitchen for healthy ready-to-eat snacks. Don't let the vegetables rot. When you buy them, wash and cut them, then store them in a Tupperware container in your fridge for easy access.
- ▶ Make sure healthy foods are available wherever you are. Keep snacks like nuts and dried fruits, whole grain cereal, and V8 juice, in your desk, locker, bag, or car.
- ▶ Drink water for thirst. If you reach for a Coke, the calories and sugar add up. A ten-ounce can of pop contains on average nine teaspoons of sugar; juice the same. As an alternative, choose fruit juices diluted with water or soda water. Carry a water bottle.



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Try something new

Make sure your snacks are interesting and add variety to your enjoyment of eating. When you go shopping, purchase exotic and seasonal fruits, different types of nuts, a variety of dried fruits such as apple rings and apricots, or pickles and olives.

Craving something crunchy? Try Corn Thins, pretzels, Japanese rice crackers, Quaker Corn Bran Squares cereal, or graham crackers. Try mixing different flavours and textures: hummus and juicy red pepper strips, antipasto and rice crackers, apple slices and almond butter, or your favourite yoghurt sprinkled with Post Grape Nuts cereal.

Read the label

A healthy choice should be:

- ▶ Low in fat. Choose snack items that have 3 grams of fat or less per serving, and avoid trans fat.
- ▶ Low in sugar. Glucose, sucrose, fructose, dextrose, and corn syrup all fit into this category.
- ▶ Rich in fibre. Choose foods that have at least 2 grams or fibre or more per serving.
- ▶ Low in sodium. Processed foods are high in salt; choose foods with 140 mg or less of sodium.

Watch your serving size. If you eat twice as much, then you need to double the amounts that the nutrition information label indicates for calories, fat and sugar. Never eat from the box. Try to add a source of protein such as a glass of milk, slice of cheese, or a few nuts; that helps to keep you full longer, as well maintain your blood sugars.

Don't eat for the sake of eating when bored or stressed. When you're hungry, make sure you have a snack that satisfies your body. When you are full, stop eating.

Happy munching! ☺

Michele Blanchet is a registered dietitian at Gilwest Clinic in Richmond and counsels individuals with HIV and hepatitis C.

