

"I live on my own and over the last few months my weight has increased. My downfall is eating sweets or chocolates when watching TV. Can you advise on healthy snacks?"
Marjory from Te Puke

Siobhan says... a balanced approach to snacking is important.

Many people feel guilty about eating between meals believing that all snack foods are bad for us. The fact is that snacking is totally normal and an acceptable part of everyone's diet. Snacks make a valuable contribution to our overall nutrient intake, the right choice of snack foods can help us to reach our daily vitamin and mineral requirements.

If your favourite snacks tend to be sweets and chocolates then a balanced approach is needed. If you've indulged a bit too much over the holiday season and want to control your weight, eating a little and often, such as regular meals and snacks, can help keep blood sugar levels stable and reduce the risk of over eating at meal times. Shopping for snacks should be just the same as other food shopping, think about what you want in advance, write a list and stick to it. If you have fruit and crackers in the pantry instead of chocolate and sweets, that's what you will choose first when you want a snack.

Ideal snack choices for people wanting to watch their weight include; dried fruit and seeds; home made popcorn; vegetable sticks e.g. carrot, cucumber, celery; wholemeal crackers; mini muffin with fruit such as blueberry; lower fat biscuits such as arrowroot; low fat yoghurt. Take advantage of the wide variety of fruit available at this time of year. Look for roadside bargains which are often cheaper than in the shops. Apples, bananas, nectarines, melon and grapes are an ideal snack.

Snack tips:

- Remember that snacks are smaller than meals, so watch the portion size!
- Plan your snacks at regular intervals and stick to them, rather than grazing all day
- Plan ahead and make sure your cupboard has a range of snacks from the list above
- For every day snacks choose those that are high in nutrients such as fibre, vitamins and minerals