



This week...

To Snack or What to Snack – That’s the Question!

You feel that familiar grumble in your mid-region and look up at the clock. There’s still another hour until lunch. *Should you grab a snack or just hang in there until mealtime? If you do grab a snack, what would be a healthy way to tide you over?*

Snacking simply means to eat or drink something between meals, regardless of whether the food is healthy. Hunger is usually the main motivation behind snacking, but factors like location, social environment, time of day, boredom and food availability contribute as well.

According to the [Canada Food Guide](#), you can enjoy snacks as part of your day. If you make healthy choices, snacks can:

- keep you energized;
- help support good health;
- provide important nutrients;
- be an important part of daily eating habits; and
- help satisfy your hunger between mealtimes.

There are different perspectives as to whether snacking between meals is a healthy thing to do. Here is a summary of conclusions regarding snacking from [Healthline](#):

- Snacking every few hours is often believed to increase metabolism. However, most studies show that eating frequency has little to no effect on metabolism.
- Snacking’s effect on appetite depends on the individual and the type of snack consumed.

- It's unnecessary to snack to maintain healthy blood sugar levels. It is good to know, however, that eating high-protein or high-fiber snacks raises blood sugar levels less than consuming high-carb snacks.
- Eating a snack is better than letting yourself become ravenously hungry. This can lead to poor food choices and excess calorie intake.
- When snacking, be sure to eat the right types and amounts of food to reduce hunger and prevent overeating later on.
- Choosing healthy snacks that are high in protein and fibre helps reduce hunger and keeps you full for several hours.

Tips for Healthy Snacking

If you are going to snack, here are some factors to consider in order to get the most out of your snacks:

- **Variety:** Here are some benefits and tips from the [Canada Food Guide](#) for choosing a variety of healthy foods for your snacks. [See this PDF](#) published by Alberta Health Services regarding healthy snacks.
- **Amount and Portions:** In general, it is best to eat snacks that provide about 200 calories and at least 10 grams of protein to help you stay full until your next meal.
- **Frequency:** Your number of snacks varies based on your activity level and meal size. If you are very active, you may prefer 2–3 snacks per day, while a more sedentary person may do best with 1 or no snacks.
- **Amount of Planning:** Think ahead of time about healthy snacks when planning your meals and add them to your grocery list. Follow the healthy eating recommendations to help make it easier to [plan ahead](#).
- **Portability:** Have some portable snacks when you are out doing errands or traveling in case hunger strikes.
- **Snacks to Avoid:** Processed, high-sugar snacks may give you a brief jolt of energy, but you will likely feel hungrier an hour or two later.
- **Eating Mindfully:** Eat your snacks slowly and without distractions such as reading emails or watching TV. Choose small portions. Serve a small amount for your snack and try not to eat directly from large containers. Eat snacks when you *actually* feel hungry, and not just out of routine. Try to avoid snacking when you feel especially tired, bored or emotional.

To snack or not to snack – that is your decision. But if you do, snack smart!

If you would like to contribute, or have ideas about what you would like to see in the **ReFresh** series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.