

Snack yourself slim

It's not your meals that are causing your waist to widen, it's all those "little nothings" you eat in between. Learn to curb mindless noshing and set your diet on the right track

You eat healthful meals, but the scale still won't budge. What's going on? There's a good chance you're snacking too much. Compared with 30 years ago, Americans now eat about 600 calories per day through snacking alone—the equivalent of consuming a fourth meal, experts say. The problem is that most people do it without thinking. You know a second helping of mashed potatoes at dinner will go straight to your thighs, but grabbing a handful of candy as you walk by your co-worker's desk somehow doesn't count. How about that large iced mocha you drank during your morning commute? Or the vending machine chips you polished off at the office? Fortunately, there's a simple fix: Nutritious, satisfying meals can save you if you're overdoing it on snacks. Get a grip on between-meal munching and take your first step toward real, lasting weight loss.

By *Julia Savacool*




Mind your munching

TOO MUCH SNACKING MIGHT...

- ❖ Raise your blood pressure and put you at risk for type 2 diabetes.
- ❖ Give you a sugar high, then make you feel sluggish.
- ❖ Fill you with nutritionally empty calories.
- ❖ Cause you to lose track of how much you're eating.

RAFAL STRZECHOWSKI/PHOTOALTOCORBIS (WOMAN), ISTOCKPHOTO (ALL PAPER BACKGROUNDS)



Beware of the health halo

In a recent study, people who ate cookies labeled "organic" believed their snack had 40 percent fewer calories than the same cookies that had no label.



Dodge snacking disasters

Eating between meals has a sneaky way of ballooning your waistline. Try these fixes for seven common snack attacks.

You can't make it to lunchtime without hitting the vending machine.

THE FIX: Adding protein-rich foods, like yogurt or eggs, to your breakfast will help you feel full longer and ward off midday urges to eat. If you must visit the vending machine, look for a package of mixed nuts or whole-grain crackers and peanut butter. The protein in these selections will help tide you over until lunch.

You snack to get a 3 p.m. energy boost at the office.

THE FIX: Your lunch is likely out of balance. Make sure you have a mix of carbohydrates to give you an energy lift, protein and healthful fats (like nuts or olive oil), which make you feel more satiated. Still craving a snack? Try apple slices with a tablespoon of peanut butter for a good combination of protein, fats and carbohydrates.

You have no time for meals during the day, so you nibble nonstop.

THE FIX: Eat only from a dish and only while sitting down. You consume far less food when you take the time to be mindful of what's on your plate. In a recent study, people consumed an average of 67 fewer calories when they ate slowly and savored their dinner, compared with those who scarfed down their food.

You like to munch at midnight.

THE FIX: Make sure your dinner includes enough filling fiber, which can help you get through the night without raiding the fridge. Add white beans to marinara sauce or toss them into a large salad to accompany your main course. If your hunger becomes too much to handle and you must have a late-night snack, consider a cup of protein-rich, low-fat yogurt.

You gravitate toward good-for-you foods, like trail mix, so you think you can eat as much as you want.

THE FIX: Remember, healthful snacks have calories, too—and trail mix is a calorie-dense food (especially when it contains extras such as chocolate chips). Instead, stick with small servings (1/3 cup) or have fresh fruit with a handful of nuts instead.

You snack all day but "make up for it" with smaller meals.

THE FIX: It's OK to skip the three-square-meals formula, but don't just eat mindlessly. To stay satisfied, have small meals (250 calories) every four hours. For instance, nonfat Greek yogurt with fresh fruit; a small bagel with light cream cheese and vegetable sticks; or half a turkey sandwich with tomatoes and lettuce on whole-grain bread.

You have a sweet tooth that needs satisfying.

THE FIX: If dessert is your favorite way to treat yourself, don't forgo it altogether. You don't need to deprive yourself, but keep your serving sizes in check. Some smart ideas: Cut portions in half (for example, enjoy just one cookie or 1/2 cup of frozen yogurt topped with fresh fruit), or purchase desserts packaged in single servings.



Build a better pantry

Sometimes, you just can't wait for dinner. Purge your cupboards and stock the snacks listed below, so if you have to grab something, at least it's good for you!

TRADE THIS



Mixed nuts
(800 calories per cup)

FOR THIS



Shelled pistachios
(180 calories per cup)

SAVE
620
calories

TRADE THIS



Cola (190 calories)

FOR THIS



Sparkling water or seltzer + mint + lime (2 calories)

SAVE
188
calories

TRADE THIS



Jelly doughnut (290 calories)

FOR THIS



2 fig bars (110 calories)

SAVE
180
calories

TRADE THIS



Candy bar (235 calories)

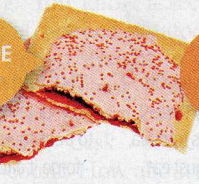
FOR THIS



Nonfat chocolate pudding (60 calories)

SAVE
175
calories

TRADE THIS



Iced breakfast pastry
(205 calories)

FOR THIS



Whole-wheat toast
(100 calories) + **1 tsp. fruit preserves** (35 calories)

SAVE
70
calories

TRADE THIS



Potato chips (154 calories)

FOR THIS



Pretzels (108 calories)

SAVE
46
calories

*Calories are per serving unless otherwise noted.



More smart swaps

TRADE **King-size ice cream sandwich** (340 calories) : SAVE
FOR **Skinny Cow chocolate sandwich** (140 calories) : **200** calories

TRADE **2 chocolate-chip cookies** (234 calories) : SAVE
FOR **Kind Plus Mini bar** (107 calories) : **127** calories

TRADE **nacho tortilla chips** (141 calories) : SAVE
FOR **air-popped popcorn** (31 calories) + **chipotle powder** (31 calories) + **squeeze of lime** (2 calories) : **77** calories

TRADE **vanilla ice cream** (300 calories per cup) : SAVE
FOR **yogurt** (192 calories) + **berries** (10 calories) : **98** calories

TRADE **cinnamon doughnut** (200 calories) : SAVE
FOR **2 graham crackers** (120 calories) : **80** calories

TRADE **pepperoni** (135 calories) : SAVE
FOR **low-fat string cheese** (50 calories) + **1/4 cup marinara sauce** (35 calories) : **50** calories

TRADE **nacho cheese dip** (150 calories) : SAVE
FOR **1 ounce melted low-fat Cheddar** (90 calories) + **1/2 cup salsa** (35 calories) : **25** calories

Sources: Melissa Buczek-Kelly, RD, co-founder of Right Start Nutrition; Marisa Moore, RD, spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association; Carmen Piernas, department of nutrition, University of North Carolina Gillings School of Global Public Health; Brian Wansink, PhD, author of Mindless Eating; Jill Weisenberger, RD, nutrition consultant and author of Diabetics Weight Loss—Week by Week

ALLESALLTAG BILDAGENTAGEFOTOSTOCK (WOMAN); ISTOCKPHOTO (MIXED NUTS, COLA, DOUGHNUT, FIG BARS, CANDY BAR, PUDDING); ROBERT KIRKGETTY IMAGES (PISTACHIOS); JOSE LUIS PELAEZGETTY IMAGES (SELTZER); MICHAEL NEELON/ALAMY (POP-TART); RAPHAEL ANGEL/ISTOCK/ALAMY (TOAST); LARS KLOVBERGETTY IMAGES (CHIPS); D. HURST/ALAMY (PRETZELS)