

Healthy snacking while at home

Working from home can create a long list of advantages, but it can also have some big pitfalls. One of the biggest concerns I have heard from people is how to curb the boredom snacking or how to snack better. Including snacks in your daily eating routine is a great way to control energy levels and your overall portions throughout the day. Some studies have found that consistent eating throughout the day can lead to lower overall calories consumed and sometimes weight loss. However, creating healthful, nutrient-dense snacks is key. Here are some of my top tips when it comes to snacking:

1. **Try to snack mindfully.** Mindful eating is an excellent way to tune into your body's ability to communicate what it needs. When you are eating mindfully, you stop and think about the snack. You ask yourself whether you are hungry or are you searching for a break? If you are starting to feel the first symptoms of being hungry, stomach growling, etc, then it's best to go ahead and eat something before you hit the "hangry" point. If you choose to eat something prior to when you hit this point, you're more likely to make a better choice for the snack. If you're looking for something to eat because you need a break, take a quick lap around your block or set a timer on your phone and take a 5-10 minute break. Taking these breaks can not only help curb the boredom eating, but can also increase your productivity. Mindful eating is a great way to promote healthful snacking.
2. **Drink a glass of water first** – My next tip is to pause and drink a glass of water prior to grabbing a snack. Taking the time to drink water encourages you to practice mindfulness, but sometimes when you're feeling hungry it can actually be a sign of dehydration. Drinking a glass of water first will allow you time to evaluate whether you were truly hungry or just dehydrated. Maintaining good hydration is key to a good eating pattern and snacking better.
3. **Eat when you're hungry.** If you are feeling signs of hunger such as a growling stomach, headache, or irritability, it's best to stop and eat something. Depriving yourself of foods because you feel like it's not time for you to be hungry or you are trying to stick to a certain amount of calories in a day can be more detrimental to your health. It is best to eat something when you are hungry, regardless of timing; if you don't eat when you are hungry, you are setting yourself up for a potential binge. Restriction is not always the best solution, and you should eat when you are hungry because you are better equipped to make healthful decisions when you honor your hunger instead of restricting.
4. **Be prepared.** Have your refrigerator and pantry stocked with nutrient-dense foods that you can snack on. Stocking your pantry with healthful foods is a great defense for those snack attacks in the middle of the day.
5. **Pair a carbohydrate with a protein or fat.** When you are planning your snacks, try to create snack ideas that include a source of complex carbohydrates and a protein or a fat. The combination of fiber from the complex carbohydrates and the protein or fat provides for a slow-digesting, energy dense snack that will keep you filled and energized. Some of my favorite combinations are a piece of fruit with nut butter, grapes and cheese cubes, hummus and veggies and yogurt with granola. The key to making a healthy snack is finding the right combination of carbohydrates to protein or fat to create a satisfying snack that won't weigh you down.
6. **Prep ahead.** Even if you're working from home, prep your snacks ahead of time. If the snack is already prepared ahead of time, you're more likely to grab for that snack when you get hungry. Next, if the snack is already prepared and the portion size is set, this allows you to enjoy the snack with a normal portion. If you are still hungry 30 minutes after eating the snack, go grab something else, but this can help you keep from overeating.

