

Holiday Snacks: Good and Bad

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Holiday goodies from neighbors and friends lined up in the dining table; a groaning snack table at the New Year's Eve party; and open bad of chips passed around while you're watching football on TV: if you're worried about holiday weight gain, this may be where you win or lose.

Yes, there are some major holiday feasts but only two or three over a two-week period – not enough to make a major change in your weight or eating patterns. “If you get used to grabbing a cookie or a piece of candy each time you pass through the dining room, though, your stomach will come to expect similar treats...until you tell it otherwise,” according to Cindy Hankes, APNP, a nurse practitioner with the Fond du Lac Regional Clinic in Fox Lake.



There is not a clear cause/effect relationship between snacking and weight gain. “Some studies suggest that snacking may help prevent weight gain by stabilizing blood sugar and reducing the urge to binge, while other programs discourage or forbid snacking,” Hankes says.

Not When But How Much

The key is not when you eat but rather what you eat and how much. If you think you can best control your overall calorie intake by avoiding snacks, then do that. Otherwise, there are some commonly acted strategies for snacking that may help rather than hinder your weight goals.

Avoid Calorie-Dense Snacks

- The ideal snack should be about 100 to 200 calories
- Save candy, cookies and other baked goods, after the meal
- Take a small piece and savor every bite

Fruits, Veggies are Better

- Fruits and vegetables are packed with vitamins, minerals and other important nutrients
- Go easy on the dips based on sour cream and cream cheese
- Stick with lighter options like hummus

Go Easy on Salty Carbohydrates

- Avoid chips and pretzels
- Carbs go through your digestive system leaving you more hungry

Nuts are a Better Choice

- Healthy balance of protein, fat and carbohydrates

- Consider unsalted or lightly salted mixed nuts

Go for the Whole Grain

- Whole grains are slow to digest
- Try whole wheat crackers with a thin slice of low-fat cheese
- Popcorn – go easy on butter and salt

Take It Easy

- Eat slowly
- Savor every bite and quit when you've had enough

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