

Top Tips for Choosing Snacks

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By Chris Rosenbloom, PhD, RDN//Contributor | Monday, February 25, 2019

Did you know that 50% of all eating occasions are snacks? And, 63% of all food choices are decided within an hour of eating them? Dr. Shelley Balanko of The Hartman Group (a food and beverage consulting firm) recently shed some light on snacking in 2019. “Snacks are replacing meals because they are flexible, fun, and easy to individualize,” she said.

For swimmers, snacks can help prevent hunger, sustain energy, recover from a hard workout, and sharpen mental focus. Snacks can also be eaten as a reward after a long workout and appeal to a sense of discovery of new cultures and flavors.

But, how do you choose a “good” snack? Here are some do’s and don’ts for swimmers when choosing snacks.

DO use snacks to help increase fruit and vegetable intake. Only 9% of high school students meet the recommendation for fruit intake, and only 2% meet the recommendation for vegetables, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018 State Indicator Report on Fruits & Vegetables).

- 100% fruit juice, like pomegranate, tart cherry, or blueberry juice (all contain antioxidants and polyphenols to help sore muscles.)
- Grapes, bananas, apples, pears, oranges, tangerines, cherries, or berries
- Carrots, celery, cucumber, red, yellow, green, and orange pepper strips with yogurt dip, hummus, or bean-based dips
- Frozen fruit smoothies
- Poached pears, baked apples, warm cherries, or berries over frozen yogurt
- Dried apple snacks

DON'T jump on the low carb fads. Swimmers need carbs, including some simple carbs or sugar, for sports performance, and normal growth and development.

DO use snacks to get nutrients to power your performance; look for snacks that contain protein, vitamins, minerals, fiber, and phytonutrients (nutrients found in plants).

- Greek or Icelandic-style yogurt with active probiotic cultures
- Beef or turkey jerky
- Granola bars with nuts and seeds
- Hard boiled egg
- Edamame
- Black bean chips
- Pouches of tuna or chicken with whole grain crackers

DON'T think that a snack labelled organic, GMO-free, or gluten-free is a healthier alternative. An organic, non-GMO, gluten-free candy bar or cookie is still candy or a cookie.

DO explore new flavors of your favorites.

- Thai chili peanut butter
- Sriracha bean dip
- Zaatar flatbread
- Buffalo seasoned tuna
- Granola made with ancient grains
- Tao Kae Noi (Crispy seaweed)

DON'T eat so many snacks that you miss meals. Swimmers need both traditional meals and snacks.

DO plan to pack snacks for long days of practice and school. By packing snacks, you won't as easily succumb to the quick trip through the drive-thru for chicken nuggets, fries, and soft drink.

- Single serving bags of almonds, peanuts, pistachios, or walnuts
- Single serving bags of roasted chickpeas
- Boxes of raisins
- Single serving pretzels and hummus
- Single serve bag of popcorn

Information on snacking trends was obtained at a sponsored conference during a session sponsored by Bush Brothers and Company. During the session I had the opportunity to taste Bush's chickpea snacks, bean dips, and bean chips. They were delicious, however, I was not asked nor compensated to write this article.

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