

Health & Nutrition Sciences

SNACKING TO SUPPORT YOUR NUTRITION

What is a snack?

Snacking is a worldwide eating behaviour, typically defined as the consumption of foods or beverages outside of structured main meals. However, there is no universally agreed definition of a snack, and perceptions vary widely across individuals. Snack choices are influenced by factors including physiological hunger, enjoyment, convenience, and increasingly, health-related considerations (1). In the UK, recent research indicates that 95% of adults snack regularly, consuming an average of 2.28 snacks per day (2).



In the UK, snacks are estimated to contribute at least **one-fifth** of total daily energy intake (2)

Dietary intake in the UK

Given the prevalence of snacking, examining dietary patterns in the UK provides important context for understanding the nutritional role of snacks. Recent data from the National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) reports several imbalances across key nutrients and food groups in the UK population, highlighting an opportunity for snacks to help address nutrient shortfalls and excesses.

Recent NDNS data (2019–2023) highlight several key findings among UK adults:



96%

did not meet the daily fibre recommendation



82%

exceeded the recommended saturated fat intake



81%

exceeded the recommended free sugars intake



17%

met the 5 A Day fruit and vegetable recommendation

The National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) (3) provides valuable insight into the diet, nutrient intake and nutritional status of the UK population.

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SMART SNACKING

When chosen wisely, snacks can support a balanced diet by providing essential nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, protein, and dietary fibre. The foods listed below are some examples, selecting one item from each group can help promote nutrient diversity and a variety of flavours, colours, and textures.

PROTEIN			CARBOHYDRATE	
Chicken slices	Boiled egg	Tinned tuna	Rice cakes	Porridge oats
Edamame beans	Nuts & nut butters	Low-fat Greek yogurt	Wholegrain crackers	Wholegrain bread
FRUIT AND VEGETABLES			DAIRY PRODUCTS	
Bananas	Apples	Satsumas	Low-fat cottage cheese	Kefir
Pears	Berries	Veggie sticks	Unsweetened fromage frais	Natural yogurt

Combining protein and fibre-rich carbohydrates can enhance satiety whilst fuelling our body throughout the day. Dairy products contribute meaningful amounts of calcium needed for the maintenance of normal bones and fruit and vegetables offer a range of essential micronutrients. Below are some ideas of simple combinations. Be sure to explore a wide range of options to accommodate diverse food preferences, including cultural traditions and seasonal availability.



Veggie sticks served with hummus



Apple slices with nut butter



Wholegrain toast with cottage cheese



Low-fat Greek yogurt paired with berries

References:

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