



Who says snacks can't be healthy?

(Jun 27, 2007) With a market flooded with delicious -- and unhealthy -- snack foods, it can be hard to find tasty and reasonably priced alternatives. Flavourless rice cakes aside, what's out there that isn't full of artery clogging saturated fats, barrels of salt or tons of unrefined sugars?

Go for the real foods

When looking for those healthier alternatives, Dr. Jonny Bowden, a board certified nutritionist and author of [The 150 Healthiest Foods on Earth](#), suggests you choose snacks relatively low in calories (under 200), not fried (no potato chips), with at least 5 grams of protein and made with whole foods." Read the nutritional and ingredients label and avoid anything with high fructose corn syrup and trans fatty acids. Be wary of the No Trans Fat label. "Even if [an ingredient] says 'partially hydrogenated' it contains trans fats, no matter what the label says," said Dr. Bowden.

Try something new

Have an aching for a chewy granola bar? Pass on the nutrient-vacuous and unsatisfying bars sold at your local grocer and go for something like the [Kashi's](#) Cherry Dark Chocolate Granola Bar. With 120 calories, 5 grams of protein and 4 grams of fiber it's a smart choice. With most Kashi products, you don't sacrifice taste for health.

Almonds are a healthy snack but straight out of the package they can be dry and boring. Look for flavored varieties that are low in sodium. If you can't afford the high priced organic almonds try Blue Diamond Salt and Vinegar Almonds for a tasty alternative.

Want to cut out the trans fat chips at your next party but don't want to upset the guests? There are plenty of healthier choices. Pirates Booty with aged white cheddar is just one of the flavours sold by [Robert's American Gourmet](#). One serving has 130 calories, 2 grams of protein and 1 gram of fiber. Not incredibly healthy but better than those greasy potato chips.

Give up the soda -- even the diet varieties are unhealthy. You can still satisfy your craving by adding real fruit juice to sparkling water, like Perrier or Calistoga. You've got yourself a healthier soft drink with a fraction of the calories.

Our number one choice

Chocolate is high up on the list for snack food. Relax...dark chocolate, in moderation, is a great way to treat the sweet tooth and provide some solid health benefits. According to The Journal of the American Medical Association, not only can dark chocolate "help lower blood pressure" but the antioxidants in dark chocolate can "gobble up free radicals, destructive molecules that are implicated in heart disease and other ailments." Researchers at American Heart Association even report dark chocolate can "improve insulin resistance." Whenever you can look for fair-trade, organic chocolate with at least 65 percent cocoa. You'll find it more satisfying than that sugar-laden bar you picked up at gas station and you'll be less likely to gorge.

With any healthy snack, it's important to watch your portion size because any healthy snack can turn into an unhealthy choice quickly. "Even if you're eating great food, calories still count. Junk foods and those healthy snacks high in carbs and low in protein and fat, can still raise blood sugar and insulin which sets you up for fat storage," said Dr. Bowden.

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