



HEALTH NOTES



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Adventist Medical
Evangelism Network

AMEN's mission is to motivate, train, and equip Seventh-day Adventist health-care professionals to team with pastors and members, uniting the church to restore Christ's ministry of healing to the world, hastening His return. To learn more about AMEN and get involved go to: amensda.org.

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About Snacks

HISTORICALLY, A FAMILY seated around the table and eating a well-prepared meal at regular times was considered normal behavior. More recently, snacking between meals has become a nearly universal practice. A snack is some food or drink eaten between regular meals.

Snacking patterns of U.S. adults have changed dramatically over time.¹ In 1979 more than 40% of adults never ate a snack between meals. Thirty years later only 10% of adults never ate snacks between meals. In 1979 only 7% of adults ate three snacks in a day but more recently 21% of adults eat three snacks a day.

At the present time 25% of the daily calories come from snacks and not regular foods. Snack foods are not nearly as nutritious as real foods eaten at mealtime. Snacks are high in sugar, salt, and fat and are lacking micronutrients found in wholesome foods.

Snacks most frequently consumed in decreasing order are sugar-sweetened beverages; savory snacks such as pretzels, tortilla and potato chips, and crackers; and candies, cakes, pastries, and pies. Much lower on the list are fruits, nuts, and seeds.

Motivations to snack depend on multiple factors. While "hunger" is a common prompt to snack, it is not a reliable measure of nutritional need and is often conditioned by other factors. Food location is another prompt. The presence of snacks in the workplace is often a trigger to snack.

There are many social situations in which snacking is considered routine and a person often grazes on snacks at social gatherings. Many do distracted eating—sitting there munching away while watching TV and not paying attention to how much they are taking in. Then there is the person who eats constantly for the hedonistic pleasure that comes from the different tastes and textures of snacks.

Snacking is a manifestation of self-indulgence. Selfie pictures are self-promoting, and snacking is the food equivalent of putting your mouth up front. One of the worst effects of snacking is the consumption of excess calories that leads to overweight and obesity.

The next set of U.S. dietary guidelines may address snacking in addition to balanced food recommendations. Not eating between meals is an important discipline.

THE BIBLE: The fundamental principle regarding nutrition is that your relationship with God is more important than food. God will provide you with enough to eat, but not so much that you become



obese. You may get hungry, but you won't starve to death. This was the experience of the children of Israel who learned this lesson through a bit of hunger.

"So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord." —*Deuteronomy 8:3 (NKJV)*

Jesus repeated the same principle: "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." —*Matthew 6:31-33 (NKJV)*

ELLEN WHITE stresses the need to eat at regular times and to avoid snacks. "Regularity in eating is very important for health of body and serenity of mind. Never should a morsel of food pass the lips between meals." —*Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene, p. 50*

"Regularity in eating should be carefully observed. Nothing should be eaten between meals, no confectionery, nuts, fruits, or food of any kind. Irregularities in eating destroy the healthful tone of the digestive organs, to the detriment of health and cheerfulness." —*Counsels for the Church, p. 223*

"If all would eat at regular periods, not tasting anything between meals, they would be ready for their meals and would find a pleasure in eating that would repay them for their effort."

—*Child Guidance, p. 387*

So, for good health and a trimmer figure it is best to avoid snacking between meals.

¹R.S. Sebastian et.al, "Snacking Patterns of U.S. Adults" Food Surveys Research Group Dietary Data Brief No. 4, June 2011.