8 Healthy Snacking

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Key Points

- Snacking, or "eating between regular meals," is important to help maximize performance and maintain mental and physical acumen.
- Healthy snacks can help increase energy and alertness without promoting weight gain.
- Keep nutrient dense snacks at home, work, or "on the go."
- Snacks for night operations should include foods low in carbohydrate and high in protein.
- Snacks high in water, such as fruit, are great for warm weather operations.
- Snacks high in carbohydrate are good to consume when exercising in the cold.
- · Avoid high-fat snacks during missions.

nergy expenditure can be extremely high on given days and during various operations, and it is often difficult to eat enough at meals. Snacking becomes very important during these times and may help maintain performance and mental acuity. In addition, most of us snack at various times during the day and evening anyway, so it becomes important to look at what constitutes healthy snacks.

Healthy Snacking and Making the Most of Snacks

Most people think snacking is unhealthy and leads to weight gain. That notion, however, has emerged because most people don't eat healthy snacks. If you don't care about gaining weight, just about any snack will do; but if you want to maintain weight and perform well, then your selection of snacks is critical.

Carefully chosen, snacks can fill nutritional gaps and boost energy without causing weight gain. Think through a typical day. How often and where do you usually snack? Are the snacks you choose high in nutrients or loadMore information on snack attacks.



ed with "empty" calories? If you aren't sure, some tips to help promote healthy snacking follow.

Snacking Tips

- · Plan snacks ahead of time.
- To stave off hunger longer, pick snacks with protein and a heart-healthy fat.
- Match snacks to activity level.
- Choose fresh fruit for a sweet snack rather than candy or cookies.
- · Be conscious of portion sizes.
- If possible, do not snack in front of the TV or computer; it is too easy to overeat.
- · Avoid all-day nibbling.
- Choose a snack that provides dietary fiber as well as other nutrients (unless the snack is for a mission).

Click here for a few ideas to start planning healthy and nutritious snacks.

The Snacking Environment

Satisfy the "snack tooth" urge with these convenient and healthy choices.

Home

Stock the fridge and freezer with:

- Low-fat varieties of yogurt, cottage cheese, cheese, milk and frozen yogurt.
- · Lean deli meats.
- Whole fruits and cut-up raw veggies.
- 100% fruit and vegetable juices, and frozen juice bars.

Stock up on microwave snacks:

- · Single serving soups.
- Whole wheat pita bread or English muffins with tomato sauce, Italian herbs and low-fat cheese for instant pizza.
- Fat-free refried beans and/or salsa with whole wheat tortillas or baked chips.
- Low-fat cheddar cheese and a leftover baked potato or plain sweet potato.

Work

Stash snacks at work

Good snacks should be kept at work in case of late or long work days or when are unable to pack a snack from home. Things to keep at work may include:

- Vegetable or bean soups in heat-and-serve cans or instant dry soup cups.
- Snack-size cereal boxes; instant oatmeal packets; boxes of raisins or other dried fruit, or whole-grain pretzels.
- · Mini cans or pouches of water-packed tuna or chicken.
- A jar of natural peanut or almond butter with whole grain crackers or rice cakes.
- · Beef jerky.
- Single-serve fruit cups packed in light syrup or water.
- · Dry roasted, unsalted nuts.
- · Low-fat granola bars.
- Canned or boxed 100% fruit juice.
- Packages of low-fat microwave popping popcorn.
- Graham crackers.
- · Raisin-nut mixes.

Find vending machines with food-group snacks:

- Peanuts, raisins, trail mix.
- · Low-fat granola bars.
- · Whole fruit.
- 100% fruit juice.
- · Low-fat milk or yogurt.
- · Pretzels.

When your duty section has the proverbial "snack station:"

If there is a snack station, talk with the POC to see if they can stock some healthier items. Suggest the following items to include in the snack station:

- · Baked chips.
- · Beef jerky.
- Dried fruit or fruit cups packed in water or light syrup.





Table 8–1. Possible Night Time Snacks for Ops

Power Bars/Peanut Toffee/Cool Mint Chocolate Clif Bar

Bagel with Cream Cheese

Crackers with Hardboiled Egg

Protein/CHO Beverage

Trail Mix

Crackers with Peanut Butter or Cheese

Dark Chocolate (semi-sweet)

Hot Tea or Iced Tea

Coffee

Coffee Flavored Yogurt

- Mini cans or pouches of tuna packed in water.
- Frozen fruit bars.
- · Low-fat yogurt.
- · High-fiber cereal or low-fat granola bars.
- Individual snack packs of vegetables or fruit with dip.
- Instant oatmeal packets.
- · Roasted, unsalted nuts.

"On the Go"

Choose wisely at convenience stores or malls where the temptation of high-calorie, high-fat options abound. Choose:

- · Bagged pretzels.
- Whole grain bagels with peanut butter or light cream cheese.
- · Frozen yogurt or small fruit smoothies (made with real fruit).
- 100% fruit juice.
- · Beef jerky.
- · Baked chips.
- · Snack size package of unsalted nuts.

What Foods/Snacks are Best for Different Occasions?

Operations at Night

Foods low in CHO and high in protein are appropriate for night operations. Avoid foods high in the amino acid "tryptophan," which is known to "promote" sleep. Choose:

- CHO made with whole grains such as sports bars, bagels, tortilla wraps, and pita bread.
- Add protein-rich foods to CHO, like low-fat cream cheese, or mashed canned beans like hummus, refried pinto or black beans.
- Protein/CHO beverages described in the fluids section of Chapter 3.
- Caffeine-rich foods, yogurts with coffee flavor, caffeine chewing gum, dark chocolate, and beverages such as coffee and tea.

Caffeine always needs to be mentioned, even in the snack food section, while on the topic of "staying awake." Products that contain caffeine, however, especially manufactured foods, are not required to have the caffeine

dosage reported on the food label. Therefore, it is possible to overdose on caffeine while being unaware of how much has been consumed. For most, between 200–400 mg of caffeine/day, or 2–3 cups of coffee, is adequate as a stimulant and should not pose any serious side effects.

Click for the caffeine content of various products.

Caffeine is less effective for a person who routinely drinks (much) coffee or caffeinated beverages, but it will work as a stimulant if consumed infrequently.

Sleep-Enhancing Foods

Foods appropriate for promoting sleep should be high in CHO and contain a small amount of protein. As mentioned above, foods with tryptophan are great "sedative/sleep-enhancing snooze foods." Table 2 provides a list of foods high in tryptophan: such foods should be eaten when you are trying to go to sleep, and conversely, avoided on night operations. The foods with the most tryptophan are listed first.

Operations in the Heat

Conducting missions in warm to hot environments require foods that provide fluid. Fluid replacement beverages are most useful, but when fruit is available, the fluid and nutrients contained in these foods are excellent. Foods that require fluids for digestion and those that naturally promote thirst, such as foods high in fat or salt, should be minimized.

Table 8–3. Snacks to Eat During Operations in the Heat		
Watermelon	Oranges	
Strawberries	Fruit Popsicles	
Grapes	CHO Beverages with Electrolytes	

Operations in the Cold

Operations in cold weather require foods that produce heat. Foods high in CHO produce more heat during digestion than either fat or protein. Drinking hot beverages, such as cocoa, coffee, and teas, increases body temperature, enhances mental awareness, and provides comfort. Table 8–4 provides suggestions for snacks to eat when the weather is cold.

Table 8–4. Snacks to Eat During Cold Weather Operations		
Granola/Power Bars	Fig Newtons	

Click here for a chart on caffeine content on popular products.

Table 8–2. Foods Containing Tryptophan–Not Suitable for Night Operations*

Oats	Bananas	
Fish (Tuna, Halibut, Sar- dines, Salmon)	Poultry (Chicken, Turkey)	
Dried Dates	Sesame	
Milk, Yogurt	Chickpeas	
Tofu	Sunflower Seeds	
Cottage Cheese, Mozzarella Cheese	Pumpkin seeds	
Red Meat (Hamburger, Steak)	Peanuts	
Eggs	Ham	
*Remember: try to also avoid		

*Remember: try to also avoid combinations of these foods (such as pizza and ham)!

Healthful snacks for the chip-and-dip crowd.

Table 8–4. Snacks to Eat During Cold Weather Operations		
Hot Chocolate	Bagel with Jam	
Pretzels	Popcorn, Corn Chips or Tortilla Chips	
Trail Mix	Crackers (any kind)	

Sustained Operations

By definition, **sustained operations** are those missions or training sessions where work is continuous for over 24 hours with minimal sleep, and few rest periods. During these times it is important to receive adequate amounts of CHO as well as fluid. The specific types of snacks will depend on the environment and how long the work must be sustained. In general, high-fat foods should be avoided and CHO with some protein should be eaten. A combination of the recommendations already made would be best, depending on the environmental conditions.

Table 8–5. Snacks to Eat During Sustained Operations		
Granola/Power Bars	Oatmeal Cookies	
Hot or Cold Protein/CHO Beverage	Bagel with Jam	
Pretzels	Trail Mix	
Dried or Fresh Fruit	Crackers with Hard Cheese	

Occasional Snacking and Discretionary Calories

There comes a time when being healthy is not a goal. Discretionary calories in snacks are calories used to satisfy hunger and personal food cravings. The amount of these snacks will depend upon whether weight maintenance, gain, or loss, is desired. Regardless, it is still wise to be selective, so if a candy bar or other sweets is essential to well-being, choose one as high in CHO and as low in fat as possible: peppermint patties, MARS Chocolate Chip Whole Grain Bar, 3 Musketeers, or gum drops, for example. Remember, these foods are not encouraged because they provide only energy—no vitamins or minerals, which are essential to process the energy. However, an occasional one will certainly not hurt.