



Smart Snacking Fact Sheet

- ✓ An adequate intake of calories, protein, and other nutrients on a regular basis is essential for health maintenance and a good quality of life.
- ✓ Snack food choices go beyond the traditional selections of chips, cookies, and candy; snacks can be chosen from all five basic food groups of the Food Guide Pyramid. Carefully chosen snacks can supplement meals by providing key nutrients for which elders have increased need.
- ✓ Elders typically have decreased muscle mass and lower activity levels than younger adults. Therefore, elders have decreased energy (calorie) requirements. However, the need for some nutrients, including calcium and vitamins D & B₆ increases with age. This means that elders need to select high quality, nutrient-dense foods.
- ✓ Snacks can provide 12 – 15% of total daily energy intake and at least 10% of seven vitamins and minerals. Snacking on foods that are full of vitamins and minerals rather than empty calories can help elders increase their intake of nutrients that may be lacking in their diet.
- ✓ Consuming a small, snack-sized portion of food at least two hours before mealtime should not interfere with appetite.
- ✓ Snacks should include nutrient-dense foods from all food groups.
 - *Milk, Yogurt, and Cheese Group*: Snacks from this group are rich in calcium, protein, riboflavin, and vitamin D.
 - *Meat and Meat Alternates Group*: This group provides excellent sources of protein, B vitamins, iron, and zinc. Be careful to choose lower fat selections from this group.
 - *Fruit Group*: This group is a good source of many nutrients including beta carotene, vitamin C, potassium, and folate. Fruits are excellent & convenient snacks. They are affordable, portable, and usually easy to chew. They can be eaten fresh, canned, or dried. Fruit juice can also make a nutritious snack.

- *Vegetable Group*: Dark green and deep yellow vegetables are excellent sources of beta carotene, which is used to make vitamin A. Tomatoes, broccoli, and bell peppers are rich in vitamin C.
 - *Bread, Cereal, Rice, and Pasta Group*: Grain products are excellent snacks; they are portable, relatively shelf-stable, and easy to prepare. Enriched grains supply energy and nutrients such as thiamin, riboflavin, folic acid, niacin, and iron. Whole grains are also excellent sources of dietary fiber.
- ✓ Liquid nutrition supplements are commercially prepared products that contain many nutrients and can be used to replace or supplement meals. However, elders are encouraged to consume whole foods since they contain dietary fiber and other components not found in supplements.

For more information, please contact:

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