

[IMAGE]

## Healthy Snacks Leads To Healthy Eating

By Julie T. Chen, MD

I am always very surprised at what my patients consider healthy snacks. Typically, my first visit with a patient always includes a thorough discussion about what they like to eat for their snacks and their main meals. This is because I am a fundamentalist and I believe that a person's nutritional intake status is frequent at the crux of someone's health issues, so I always tackle that right from the beginning.

Many of my patients think that a healthy snack is anything that has a low calorie count...that is just not true. There are a lot of foods that are 'low fat' or 'light' but has a lot of preservatives or trans-fats or artificial sugars. I consider healthy snacks as anything that is vegetable- or plant-based and that doesn't come in a stick, box, bar, or any shape that doesn't naturally come off a tree or off the ground (aka, Mother Nature).

So, when you are strapped for easy ideas for snacks for your kids and yourself, consider the following:

- Hummus in small container with pepper, celery or carrot sticks
- Raw organic nuts easily portable in a container or bag from home
- Small container of mix of legumes
- Organic tea with organic almond, soy or coconut milk
- Small portion of balanced meal/leftovers from last night's dinner
- Any vegetable cut up in portable portions to take in bag or container to work
- Edamame

Pediatric - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark These are just a few sample ideas of what to eat for healthy snacks. Notice that none of these are pre-packaged bars or powders or non-real food options. I've noticed in my practice that patients feel and perform the best when eating straight out of Mother Nature's garden. By eating this way, you can be certain that the foods are not tainted with preservatives or fillers.

If you must eat a bar or boxed snack, let it be a rarity instead of using them as your daily staple of snacks. While I know some of you may think this is too difficult, I can assure you that my patients have been able to do this once they start trying it. At first glance, it seems daunting and undoable but once implemented into

such a fashion where it becomes second nature to you, you'll find that when you do eat those bars, that they no longer taste very good because they taste too artificial in comparison to real whole foods.

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