

# *Snacking With Purpose*

## Choosing Snack Foods To Fit Nutrition Needs Is Easier Than Ever

(NAPSA)—Snacking has become a way of life for some Americans, with over 90 percent of consumers doing so on a daily basis. According to recent eating trends, snacks are becoming more like minimeals, making it even more important to snack with a specific purpose in mind—balanced nutrition. Nutrition and convenience are sought after when it comes to snack items and this has led to the production of many food products that aim to fit a variety of needs and preferences. Many snacks now boast having less “unhealthy” ingredients and more nutrients, helping to fill the “nutrient gaps” in our diets. There is even a slew of specialty products that speak to those with particular health and nutrition needs.

America is an on-the-go nation so consumers sometimes look for quick and easy items to eat on the run. Unfortunately, many times, convenient options can be packed with calories and fat and contain few of the nutrients we need in a day. One way to make eating on the run more nutritious is to increase the number of fruits and veggies eaten in a day. Smoothies—made with yogurt, fruit and 100 percent juice, packaged for ease of consumption and portability—and vegetable drinks make it easier to get the recommended number of servings per day that many Americans fail to reach.

Snacking with a purpose also provides the opportunity to fill nutrient gaps in the diet. We can choose from countless products that offer calcium, whole grains, fiber or omega-3 fatty acids—nutrients that are important and often insufficient in American diets. Food technology allows for nutrients to be included in products that are consumed every day, such as fortified milk (vitamin



D) and orange juice (calcium). Today, snacks like granola bars can have fiber and whole grains, but also omega-3 fatty acids. These products provide yet another way to help us meet our daily nutrient needs.

Nutritious snacking is still an option for those with food sensitivities. For example, if you have celiac disease, there is a need to avoid gluten, the protein found in wheat, rye and barley. Food companies understand the importance of this condition and have created hundreds of gluten-free products that are readily available in grocery stores around the country. Products vary from breads and pastas to snacks and beverages. Quaker's Large Rice Cakes are a convenient and delicious way to enjoy a gluten-free snack. Boost your nutrient profile by topping a large rice cake with a few tomato slices, two tablespoons of low-fat cottage cheese and a few shredded carrots. Pair with apple slices or your favorite fruit for a sweet side. With any diet requiring special dietary needs, be sure to check the ingredient label.

Daily snacking doesn't mean empty calories if you are snacking with a purpose. Remember to keep portion sizes small and compare products to choose foods that will provide the best nutritional value based on individual needs.

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