but you start to become fidgety in your seat. You imagine your dinner plate with larger and larger portions as the time passes.

**Solution: A healthy afternoon snack.**

Many people have realized the benefits of snacking when it comes to holding you until the next meal so that you don’t overeat. But the benefits can go beyond tiding your hunger, based on the snack choices that you make.

**Is it OK to Snack?** Snacking can be an important part of eating when it is done in the right way. The snack choices that you make impact your overall diet, so when you choose smartly, it can be a positive move for your overall health. If you want to avoid overeating at meals, snacking can be the perfect way to provide long lasting hunger satisfaction. You may actually consume fewer calories for the day when you take the edge off hunger by snacking, and in doing so, you can help manage weight.

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**Choosing a Smart Snack.**

A smart snack choice is one that will provide your body the nutrients it needs to run efficiently, while providing the fuel that you need to keep going for the day. That means, it should be nutrient dense, providing vitamins and minerals, and it should provide good quality macronutrients like protein, healthy fats, and healthy ‘carbs’ like fiber. Unfortunately, many of the foods that are marketed as snacks or that people commonly choose for snacks are just the opposite -- high in sugar and bad fats, and low in micronutrients.

**Solution: Peanuts and peanut butter ‘fit the bill.’**

Peanuts and peanut butter are not only affordable, tasty and delicious, but they are nutrient dense, thereby improving your diet quality, they keep you feeling fuller longer while giving you energy, and they reduce your risk of chronic disease when eaten in small portions daily.
or a “ping-pong ball size” serving of peanut butter… These are what you should consider serving sizes. The amount you snack on still remains a factor when you are choosing healthily. Snacking should be part of a balanced diet and should not contribute to exceeding your normal calorie intake. With proper portions and smart choices for health, snacking can enhance your overall diet.
Since peanuts and peanut butter won’t cause your blood sugar to go up and down like a “roller coaster”, they help to maintain healthy energy levels throughout the day. Snacking on peanuts will help to bridge the gap between meals so you will be able to focus better and have the stamina to perform your responsibilities.

It’s eating high carbohydrate snacks that can cause your blood sugar to spike and then crash, making concentration difficult, decrease your energy and increase fatigue.

Peanuts and peanut butter keep you more satisfied than many other snacks. A study conducted at Purdue University showed that those who consumed peanut snacks were more satisfied than those who ate high carbohydrate snacks like rice cakes (9). Those who ate the peanut snacks lasted about 2½ hours as opposed to ½ hour for the high carbohydrate snacks.

Peanuts and peanut butter are high in protein, healthy fats, and fiber. These attributes contribute to helping you feel fuller longer. Eating peanuts and peanut butter will also help to keep your blood sugar more stable partly because they have a low glycemic index (GI). Peanuts have a GI of 14 on a 100-point scale, whereas pretzels have a GI of 83. Eating pretzels would produce a much larger rise and fall in blood sugar than the peanuts, and this is what can make you hungry and sluggish.

Another interesting fact is that peanut and peanut butter eaters tend to have lower Body Mass Index (BMI) values and lower body weights than non-peanut eaters (10). While those who eat peanuts have been shown to naturally adjust their calorie intakes throughout the day, some evidence shows that resting energy expenditure is actually increased after peanut consumption – so you are burning energy by eating them (11).

Many snacks that are found in vending machines don’t provide the balanced package of protein, healthy fats, and fiber that peanuts and peanut butter do. Planning your snack can be helpful, so that you don’t resort to reaching for that candy bar. Bring an apple to dip in peanut butter, or some homemade trail mix with peanuts and dried cranberries on the go.

1. Nutrients dense
2. Improve the quality of your diet
3. Reduce hunger and help you stick to your diet
4. Help you perform and provide the fuel to keep you going
5. Promote heart health
6. Cut diabetes risk
7. Keep your blood sugar from going on a “roller coaster” ride
8. Convenient, portable, and accessible
9. A natural, whole food
10. Taste great and are enjoyed by all ages
Peanut Snacks for All Ages

Kids may scream for a peanut butter and jelly snack, while adults may dip into a spicy peanut sauce. Either way, peanuts and peanut butter are ageless when it comes to nutrients, satiation, and health.

Nutrient dense snacks can be especially important for growing children and for the elderly, both of whom may have smaller appetites. A recent study in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association looked at the influence of snacking on energy intakes and energy density in older adults since their energy intakes tend to decline with age. The study showed that snacking contributed to 14% of their daily protein intakes and that snacking helped them to consume the calories they needed (16).

Peanuts and peanut butter provide protein, fiber, and many vitamins and minerals, all of which are important to growth, the immune system, and overall body metabolism.

They are also great ‘magnet foods’ – peanuts taste great with dried berries in a healthy trail mix, and peanut butter dips are perfect for getting kids to eat their fruits and vegetables.

Gathering the evidence, you can’t deny that peanuts and peanut butter are a power pack of a snack. It’s clear that choosing smart snacks can impact the nutrients you get for the day, your levels of hunger and energy, and your long-term disease risk.

Peanuts and peanut butter naturally taste great and can be enjoyed by all ages.

References

Go to www.peanut-institute.org for:
- Peanut and peanut butter nutrition research
- Recipes
- Meal plans
- Educational materials

The Peanut Institute is a non-profit organization that supports nutrition research and develops educational programs to encourage healthy lifestyles.

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