



The  
**Peanut  
Institute**

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**FOOD FOR  
THOUGHT**

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## Peanuts & Peanut Butter

# Healthy Snacking

### Dinner is a few hours away...

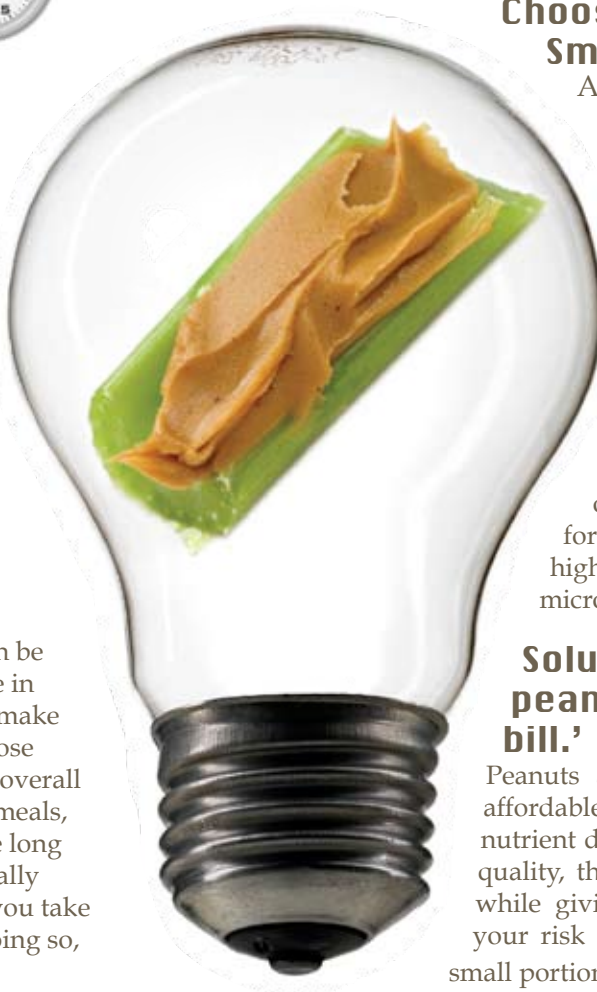


but you start to become fidgety in your seat. You imagine your dinner plate with larger and larger portions as the time passes.

#### **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.



#### **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.

# Nutrient Density and Diet Quality



A serving of peanuts or peanut butter provides many of the essential vitamins and minerals that we need each day, including: vitamin E, niacin, magnesium, copper, folate, manganese, and phosphorus. Peanuts and peanut butter also contain many bioactive compounds, like resveratrol.

The simple change to or addition of peanuts or a peanut butter snack can improve your overall diet quality. A Penn State study found that people who consumed peanuts and peanut butter have been shown to have diets with higher nutrient quality <sup>(1)</sup>. They take in many more nutrients, including 'hard-to-get' nutrients that much of the population is lacking,

more fiber, and less saturated fat and cholesterol. In another study at Purdue University, blood magnesium levels were also shown to increase in people who ate peanuts regularly for eight weeks <sup>(2)</sup>.

Emerging research is showing the health benefits of nutrients and bioactives in our diets. For example, magnesium status has been linked to metabolic syndrome and diabetes, niacin has been shown to be important in Alzheimer's disease, and resveratrol may impact performance and longevity <sup>(3,4,5,6,7,8)</sup>.

So, pretzels or cookies may fit well in your lunch bag, but if you are squeezing them in your diet as snacks, they won't give you nearly the amount of nutrition found in a serving of peanuts or peanut butter.

# Reduction in Chronic Disease Risk

Despite peanuts being thought of as a fattening food, peanuts, peanut butter, and peanut oil have mostly healthy fats – monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats – which have been shown to lower total cholesterol, "bad" LDL cholesterol, and triglycerides, and to keep "good" HDL cholesterol high <sup>(12)</sup>.

Eating peanuts, peanut butter, and peanut oil promotes a healthy heart and studies have shown a 25-50% reduction in heart disease risk when they are consumed between one and 5 times per week <sup>(13)</sup>. Eating them in small doses every day, such as in the form of a snack, shows the best benefit <sup>(14)</sup>.

Your risk of diabetes can also be cut significantly if you eat peanuts or peanut butter as a snack each day. Harvard School of Public Health found a 27% reduction in diabetes risk in women who ate a one-ounce serving of peanuts each day, and a 21% risk reduction with half a serving of peanut butter (1 Tbsp.) <sup>(15)</sup>.

# A Palm Full of Peanuts...



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.

# Performance and Energy

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 through out 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.

# Hunger Reduction and Weight Management

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<sup>(9)</sup>. Those who ate the peanut snacks lasted about 2 ½ 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<sup>(10)</sup>. 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<sup>(11)</sup>.

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.



## Reasons to Snack on Peanuts and Peanut Butter

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



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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 <sup>(16)</sup>.

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.

Go to [www.peanut-institute.org](http://www.peanut-institute.org) for:

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

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- Peanut and peanut butter nutrition research
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