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## Snacks at home

There it goes again - that familiar growling in your stomach. Hunger pangs usually hit right around dinnertime, before we may have actually gotten dinner on the table. Munchies can also hit later on at night, after you've eaten that healthy grilled chicken salad. What can you nosh on without ruining your healthy diet? Rice cakes? Forget it! Just look around your kitchen and take a peek. There's plenty there - you just need to know what to do with it.Great Fridge FindsUnless you never go grocery shopping, chances are you usually have a few things kicking around in your fridge that can make tasty snacks. Bypass the bacon and grab that peanut butter jar. No longer naughty, nuts have made a comeback as a delicious and nutritious food. Nuts and nut butters are rich in monounsaturated fats and are a good source of fiber. You still need to look at portion size though. Keep it to two tablespoons for peanut butter. Spread it on an apple, baby carrots or celery sticks to make it to dinner. Natural peanut butter is best, so make sure to pick some up the next time you're at the store.Got some salsa left over from last night's burritos? Pair it with some carrot sticks or cucumber spears (really, it's good). If you're really famished and have a can of beans on hand, you can quickly mix a few tablespoons of salsa with a cup of beans. Wrap it in a tortilla or scoop it up with a handful of tortilla chips and you have a high-fiber snack.A Dozen Healthy Pantry Pick-Me-UpsCarrots - Cut them into sticks and dip them in salsa, light salad dressing, yogurt dip or peanut butter.Bananas - On their own, they're great, but add them to a smoothie, or freeze them for a fun treat, and they're even better.Celery - They're as versatile as carrots and even lower in calories. And they're crunchy enough to help die-hard chip fans get through the munchies.Cucumbers - Slice them up and sprinkle lightly with salt for a refreshing snack.Dried cereal - Mix this up with nuts and dried fruit for a healthy post-gym treat. Just make sure to keep your serving to 1/2 cup.Nuts - Peanuts, almonds, pecans and other nuts can be tossed with dried cereal and raisins or mixed into a 6-ounce yogurt for a healthy bite.Orange juice/Other juices - If you have Popsicle molds or even just ice cube trays, pour in the juice and pop it in the freezer. In just a few hours, you'll have a cool and tasty refreshment.Peanut butter - Slather on an apple or to add a tablespoon or two to a smoothie for a protein-rich treat.Quesadillas - Use black beans or any other canned beans you have on hand. Add in a sprinkling of cheese, a dollop of salsa and you're in business.Raisins - Sprinkle these high iron and fiber-rich gems into plain yogurt or mix with 1/3 cup of nuts for instant trail mix.Salsa - makes a great dip for veggies and also can be used on sandwiches as a low fat spread instead of mayo.Yogurt - If you have plain yogurt in the fridge, you're ready to go. Add some fresh herbs (parsley, dill or thyme will all work), along with a dash of salt and pepper, and you're set.Frances Largeman, R.D., earned her undergraduate degree from Cornell University and completed her dietetic internship at Columbia University in New York. Frances has appeared on local and national TV and has been quoted in Cooking Light magazine, as well as food and health sections of local newspapers across the country.Page 2You try to be healthy. Maybe it's by working out, buying organic, or reducing how much fried food you eat. When you skip breakfast, though, which many Americans do on a daily basis, you're sabotaging the good steps you were trying to take toward being healthy in the first place. Why would anyone purposefully skip breakfast? The standard excuses run the gamut from not liking breakfast foods to trying to lose weight to the simple fact that life is too hectic and rushed in the morning and there's no time to eat. Well get ready to throw those excuses to the curb as we give you 10 healthy breakfast tips. First, let's tackle that weight loss excuse.If you're dieting you may think you're reducing your caloric intake by skipping breakfast, but not so fast -- most breakfast skippers actually end up snacking throughout the day, often overeating and bingeing on foods that are high in empty calories and less than diet friendly.Multiple studies have found that people who have been successful with significant weight loss (lost 30 or more pounds and kept it off for at least a year) are breakfast eaters -- 90 percent eat breakfast at least five days a week. Eating a nutritious breakfast helps kick start your metabolism, and when you start your day with a healthy dose of lean protein, whole grains and healthy fats, you're less likely to reach for comfort snacks later in the day.The morning rush can sabotage your diet as quickly as a lion can take down a wildebeest. You're late, you're hungry and the drive-thru window calls your name. Stop. With a little planning and preparation, you can save yourself from unhealthy breakfasts.Sorry, planning ahead doesn't mean buying a dozen doughnuts to ration over a few days. We're talking about preparing healthy breakfast options like homemade granola (made with rolled oats and dried fruit) or fiber-rich muffins. In addition to homemade on-the-go foods, keep healthy, morning-rush-friendly foods on hand, including fresh fruit (if it requires any prep work, do it when you bring it home), yogurt, whole grain cereals (don't forget oatmeal) as well as whole grain breads and nut butters for on-the-go sandwiches.Often it seems eggs have a bad rap. Are they good for you or bad for you? Should you eat just the egg whites? Or not eat eggs at all?One large whole egg is low in calories and sodium, provides more than 6g of protein, more than 250mg of choline, which helps your cells function properly and may help keep your mind sharp, and is a good source of lutein, which is important for eye health. Eggs are high in cholesterol, though, which is what gives them their bad reputation. Specifically, egg yolks are high in cholesterol -- about 210mg of cholesterol are in one large egg yolk. If you're predisposed to or have cardiovascular disease, diabetes or high levels of LDL (the bad) cholesterol, health professionals recommend you limit your daily cholesterol intake to 200mg or less -- and that eliminates those egg yolks. Research still hasn't solved the mystery as to whether or not eggs are good or bad, so if cholesterol is a concern, egg whites and egg substitutes are a good cholesterol-free option. Otherwise, an egg at breakfast can be a good source of nutrients to start your day.Oatmeal is good for you. It's rich in fiber, omega-3 fatty acids, folate and potassium -- and that's before you add any fruit or flavorings -- and can help lower your cholesterol levels and reduce your risk of heart disease. But when you're standing in the cereal aisle, it quickly becomes clear that not all oatmeal is created equal. There are four oatmeal options: steel cut, old fashioned, quick cooking and instant. The basic difference here is how processed the oats are.Steel-cut oatmeal is the least processed of the bunch. A bowl of steel-cut oatmeal contains the most amount of fiber per serving, about 4g. It takes longer to cook than other types of oatmeal and the finished product is chewier than the oatmeal you may be most familiar with, which is made of rolled oats. Old-fashioned oatmeal, or rolled oats, is often used in granola, muesli and oatmeal cookies. The oat flakes are thinner than steel-cut oats, which means they take less time to cook, but you sacrifice fiber for less prep time. Quick-cooking oatmeal eliminates more prep time and the final bowl of oatmeal is smoother than steel-cut or old-fashioned -- and again, each time you lose minutes off preparation, you lose fiber. Instant oatmeal is convenient. It comes in pre-portioned packets, a variety of flavors, and you can make it with hot water from a kettle or in the microwave. If you prefer instant oatmeal, beware of the tradeoff, though -- convenience equals added sodium and sugar.If you were offered a pill that would boost your mood, help you lose weight and lower your risk of serious disease including heart disease, diabetes and cancer, you probably wouldn't think twice before taking it. In fact, you'd probably request a bottle. Unfortunately, that pill doesn't exist yet -- however, there are about a dozen "superfoods" that can do the job just as well. Some of our breakfast favorites include:Nuts and seedsBerriesOatsSoyTea (green or black, your preference)Low-fat yogurtIt's easy to incorporate these superfoods into your diet. For example try tossing a handful (about an ounce) of omega-3 rich walnuts and antioxidant-loaded blueberries into a bowl of oatmeal or yogurt. Some other superfoods to consider, even though they're not typical breakfast fare, are broccoli, onions, garlic, tomatoes and dark leafy greens. Try whipping up a veggie omelet or frittata using these ingredients for a super breakfast.If you like to pick up smoothies on the go, be choosy. Some smoothies are more like dessert. And some contain the amount of calories you'd need in a day, not a meal. For example, a 20 oz. Peanut Power Plus Chocolate™ smoothie from Smoothie King is made with chocolate, peanut butter, bananas, soy protein, non-fat milk, sugar and honey ... and packs in more than 700 calories and 27g of fat. Turn that into a 40 oz. cup and you're drinking more than 1,400 calories and 54g of fat. A healthier Smoothie King alternative is the 20 oz. Blueberry Heaven®, with 325 calories and 1g of fat -- much more in line with the calories and fat of a healthy breakfast, although watch out for the high sugar content.The healthiest smoothie option is to make your at home. You need a blender, ice, fruit (fresh or frozen) and yogurt or juice. Choose smart ingredients -- this is a great place to incorporate some of those superfoods -- blueberries, soy (soymilk or soy protein powder) and low-fat dairy are obvious choices.In their 2009 Coffee Drinking Trends Survey, the National Coffee Association (NCA) found that Americans sure do like their coffee. Fifty four percent of American adults drink coffee every day (another 25 percent drink it occasionally), and about 14 percent of those daily coffee addicts drink gourmet coffee beverages. Coffee drinkers in the U.S. don't just sip in the morning -- they average about 3 cups of coffee every day. That can add up to a lot of unwanted calories, depending on your preparation.Brewing your own coffee in the morning, instead of relying on a fancy concoction from your local coffee shop, can save you calories and sugar, especially if you're partial to sweet coffee beverages. One cup of black coffee has no fat and almost no calories, but with each teaspoon of sugar, you're adding 50 calories. Take it light? Each tablespoon of cream adds 20 calories and about 2g of fat. Adding flavored syrups, whipped cream and caramel drizzles quickly transform your caffeine fix into a calorie, sugar and fat-laden dessert. Prepare your morning cup at home and you'll be less tempted to turn your caffeine fix into dessert.Fiber is a carbohydrate, one that humans cannot digest. Why eat something you're unable to digest? Fiber helps you feel full longer, so you don't snack as often, and it also has been shown to lower cholesterol levels and the risk of heart disease.Adults should try to eat 5g of fiber at breakfast -- it may sound like a lot but overall, adult women want to aim for at least 20g of fiber per day while men need more than 30g per day. Those five grams add up quickly, if you're smart about the foods you choose. Breakfast cereals, fruits, vegetables, whole grains (breads, oats, and corn meal) and beans are all great sources of fiber. Let's look at toast, for example. One slice of Pepperidge Farm®white sandwich bread won't even add 1g of fiber to your daily goal. Compare that to the 4g of dietary fiber in just one slice of Pepperidge Farm® Whole Grain 100% Whole Wheat bread. That's the difference between choosing bread baked with refined versus whole grains. Spread an ounce of peanut butter on that slice of toast instead of butter or jelly and you're up to about 6g of fiber, plus you've added a great source of protein.Protein is important -- it's found in almost every part of your body, from your skin and bones to your muscles and organs, blood, hormones and even in your urine (people's bodies don't store protein). Experts suggest you aim for 5g of protein in every breakfast. But how does that fit into the amount recommended for an entire day? As it turns out, that's a custom fit.The Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommends using this formula for determining your protein requirements: Eat 0.8 grams of protein for every kilogram you weigh. What does that translate to for you? The average American adult female weighs about 164 pounds; the average adult male weighs about 194 pounds. That's roughly 60g of protein for a 164-pound woman, and about 70g for a 194-pound man.Adding whole grains, nuts, eggs, low-fat dairy and lean meat to your breakfast plate can help you start the day with a good shot of protein.The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that childhood obesity rates have doubled over the last two decades (and tripled for adolescents), and overweight or obese kids are more likely to be overweight or obese adults. When you eat a healthy breakfast, you're modeling that good behavior to your kids, who will not only be more likely to eat breakfast themselves but may also have a more positive relationship with food and better body image, better weight control and improved school performance.The University of Minnesota School of Public Health found that middle schoolers were, on average, eating 5.4 times a week with their families, while high school students averaged family meal attendance about 3.9 times a week. Eating a healthy breakfast helps us all in the weight control department because it boosts our metabolism, and it helps kids stay focused in school.Did You Know?A study conducted by researchers at the University of Minnesota and published in the November 2004 issue of the "Journal of Adolescent Health," found that when teenage girls regularly ate meals with their families, they were less likely to be chronic dieters, use diet pills or have symptoms of an eating disorder (such as induced vomiting).

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