

- Health

Food for thought**Being conscious about the food you snack on can help you achieve better health**

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OUR busy daily lives often make mealtimes a rushed affair for many of us. We find ourselves eating in the car on the way to work, at our desk in front of a computer screen, while watching television shows or playing on our mobile phones.



It is time we take control of our bodies and food choices, and one way is to practise mindful eating. It is not about being perfect – always eating the right things or never allowing yourself to eat on-the-go. Rather, it is about focusing your senses and being present as you shop for, cook, serve and eat your food.

One particular area where mindful eating is needed is our choice of snacks. Quite often, we pay attention to what we eat for our main meals but fall short for the food we consume in between.

For example, how often have you had a healthy lunch and then enjoyed some sugar-laden pastries at teatime? Or munched on unhealthy potato chips when relaxing at home because it was more convenient than preparing a proper snack?

According to Nutrition Track dietitian and founder Adele Wong, Malaysians have an issue when it comes to consuming nutrient-dense food, which can lead to unnecessary deficiencies.

“Snacks are great and they can be part of a healthy eating lifestyle,” she said.

“Snacking only becomes a problem when it is done mindlessly. A wellplanned snack can keep energy and hunger levels in check.

It can also help fill the gaps when it comes to meeting your overall nutrition needs. This is why snack choices are important.

“Having something nutritious and filling as a snack (like fruits) means that you are prepared when the pesky 3pm hunger strikes. Always be ready, so that you won’t end up having to stress about what to eat or end up diving into something that is void of nutrition.”

Healthy snacks to try

Here are some suggestions of healthy snacks you can add to your diet.

Fruit – Healthy snacks do not need to be complicated. Fruits can be incredibly satisfying. Portable, easy-to-eat fruits include bananas, apples, pears, grapes, grapefruits and oranges.

Mixed nuts – These are ideal nutritious snacks. They are linked to reduced risk of heart diseases and may help prevent certain cancers, depression and other illnesses. They can also be filling. Several studies suggest that eating nuts in moderation can help you lose weight.

Yoghurt and fruit – Yoghurt can be an excellent addition to any diet but can be transformed into something not-so-good if it is combined with sugary mix-ins. Opt for plain low-fat Greek yogurt in a single-serve container with plenty of fresh fruit.

Protein shake – These are a great nutritional supplement for your diet and consists of protein powder mixed with water, milk or a milk substitute. They are easy to prepare at a moment’s notice and can help you feel full until your next meal. You can even blend in some fruits for additional flavour.

Instant oatmeal – It makes a great breakfast, and there is no reason it cannot work as a healthy snack in the middle of the day. You can add raisins for extra flavour, fibre and iron. Avoid brands that are high in brown

sugar, maple syrup and other sugars.

Wong added that when it comes to mindful snacking, the key is to create a regular eating schedule. When it comes to meal frequency and timing, there is no magic formula.

“It depends on your overall goals, lifestyle and personal preferences. Whatever you choose, make sure that you are consistent on a day-to-day basis.

“Decide how many meals and when you would like to eat. This helps you build a routine and can prevent mindless snacking.”

Hopefully, some of these suggestions will help you make the right healthy snacking choice.