

Ask Leyla: What are the rules of snacking?



Q: I'm often at a loss when it comes to snacking. Is it healthy/necessary to eat between meals? Sometimes when I snack, I don't feel full, or I find myself hungry again just a little while later. What types of snacks do you recommend?

A: Here are the rules of snacking: First, do you require a snack? Are you actually hungry?



If the answer is no, skip it. Under normal conditions, most folks do just fine with three square meals a day, eaten at the appropriate times. However, there are circumstances when a snack is needed.

Unstable blood sugar, whether it be from hypoglycemia or diabetes can be stabilized with the right snack. Generally it should contain protein and fat. A handful of nuts—Nature's original functional food—is portable and requires no prep before eating. Otherwise, any leftover protein from a previous meal should suffice—like a couple of tablespoons of chicken salad or a hard boiled egg, or a smear of nut butter on half an apple or celery stick.

Adrenal exhaustion may warrant some well-timed snacking. But what causes adrenal exhaustion? Stress. Not only mental and emotional stress, which can secrete fight or flight hormones, but the physiological stress of hypoglycemia that occurs when we don't eat at appropriate times. When blood sugar falls too low, the adrenals are called in to save the day by secreting catecholamines and inducing the breakdown of glycogen in an effort to restore blood sugar levels. If skipped meals are an almost daily occurrence, the adrenal glands will eventually become exhausted. A snack between meals can help remedy this.

The rule is to have regular mealtimes every day to keep hunger at bay and diminish the need for snacks at all. But just in case you can't, take along some nuts and seeds in your briefcase, purse, or backpack to help tide you over to the next meal.

To your health!

As you may know, I've been doing a weekly "Q&A with Leyla" podcast feature with Dr. Hoffman. Now you can get my perspective and expertise every Friday on my own episode of the *Intelligent Medicine* Podcast. If you missed last week's, you can listen here. To be sure you don't miss out on any of my important insights and information, subscribe today!