

CATCH Kids Club Family Tip Sheet: SNACK FOODS

Some people think snacking isn't healthy. Actually, snacks are a normal part of people's eating habits. And most kids need to eat them.

So snacking isn't unhealthy. But a lot of popular snack foods *are*.

As a family, name several popular snack foods. Are most of them healthy, or not so healthy? Many of the foods you named are probably processed foods. Processed foods contribute a lot of calories, added sugars, salt (sodium), and/or unhealthy solid fats (such as saturated fat) . . . and they don't contribute things like vitamins and minerals.

Many snack foods—including packaged desserts—contain the unhealthiest type of fat: **trans fat** (a solid fat). Eating too many *trans* fats can cause health problems.

To find out if a *trans* fat is in a food, look for "*trans* fat" in the Nutrition Facts on the package. Also read the list of ingredients to see if the food contains "hydrogenated" or "partially hydrogenated" fats or oils. These are *trans* fats.

People who consume too many calories from unhealthy snack foods are less likely to stay in energy balance and more likely to gain weight. (Your body is in energy balance when it burns about the same number of calories you eat.)

AD TECHNIQUES

Unhealthy snack foods are advertised a lot on TV, the Internet, and in magazines. Food companies want us to buy these snack foods without thinking about what the foods are really like. The companies use tricks—called ad techniques—to do this.

As a family, read each description of the ad techniques below. Then write down at least one food commercial that uses it.

Appeal to Health: Tries to persuade you that the product is good for your health or will make you happier. _____

Bandwagon: Tries to persuade you to buy the product because everybody else is buying it—and if you don't want to be left out you should "join the crowd" and buy it too. _____

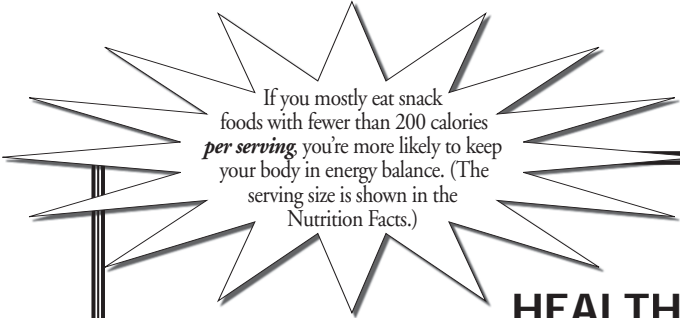
Testimonial: Uses famous people to tell about how wonderful they think the product is and why you should try it. _____

Exaggeration: Uses many descriptive words that exaggerate the quality of the product, making you think you just *have* to try it. _____

Instructions to the family:

At home or in a grocery store, check out the snack foods you eat.

1. Read the Nutrition Facts on packages to find out the amounts of sodium, added sugars, *trans* fat, and saturated fat (another unhealthy solid fat).
2. Look for “hydrogenated” or “partially hydrogenated” fats or oils in the ingredients list.
3. Rank the snack foods from healthiest to least healthy.



If you mostly eat snack foods with fewer than 200 calories *per serving*, you're more likely to keep your body in energy balance. (The serving size is shown in the Nutrition Facts.)

HEALTHY SNACK IDEAS

- ❖ Fresh fruit
- ❖ Frozen fruit chunks, such as pineapple, peaches, grapes, bananas, and strawberries
- ❖ Raw vegetables and a small amount of dip made with a vegetable oil or low-fat sour cream
- ❖ Mini-meal snack (A mini-meal is a smaller amount of a regular meal.)
- ❖ Crunchy snacks: air-popped popcorn (with no salt added), graham crackers, baby carrots, baked potato chips, low-salt pretzels
- ❖ Snack mix of pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, nuts, and raisins or other dried fruit
- ❖ Baked tortilla chips and picante sauce (salsa)
- ❖ Low-fat string cheese on low-fat whole-grain crackers
- ❖ Whole-grain bagel spread with low-fat cream cheese
- ❖ Natural peanut butter on whole-wheat bread, with non-fat or 1% milk
- ❖ Low-salt pinto beans, natural cheese, and tomato in a corn tortilla

Instructions to the family:

On the lines below, each person should write their initials and a healthy snack they're going to eat in the next few days. (Get ideas from the GO-SLOW-WHOA List attached to THE BASIC CATCH MESSAGES tip sheet.)
