

Snacking For Success

Are you a snacker? Most Americans are. We tend to eat throughout the day, rather than opting for three “square” meals. You may think that snacking is a diet destroyer, but it can actually help you stay on track toward your health goal. **The secret is in the snack you pick.**

Traditionally, the word "snack" invokes images of glazed doughnuts or greasy bags of chips. It's time to rethink that vision. **Snacks should be considered mini meals**, with lots of nutrients packed into smaller portions than a traditional meal.

They don't necessarily need to come in a snack bag either.

Sometimes a mini meal snack and a traditional snack will have the same number of calories. **That doesn't mean that these snacks are the same.** Let's look at an example...

A glazed doughnut from a leading national doughnut shop provides 260 calories, 14 grams of fat, 3 grams of protein, and 1 gram of fiber. **A mini meal of a yogurt parfait** made with plain yogurt, fresh strawberries, and granola, on the other hand, contains 250 calories, 5 grams of fat, 17 grams of protein, and 4 grams of fiber.

Now let's look at the health impact of each snack. 48% of the doughnut's calories come from fat, while the mini meal has only 19% of its calories from fat. According to the

Dietary Guidelines for Americans, **adults should get no more than 20-35% of their calories from fat.** The yogurt parfait keeps you within the guidelines while the doughnut exceeds them.

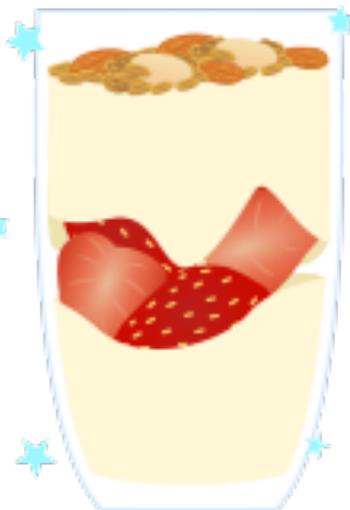
As for the comparison of protein, the parfait wins hands-down! The yogurt parfait mini meal provides a protein equivalent of a small piece of chicken or a few egg whites, while the donut only has 3 measly grams.

By eating a mini-meal snack instead of a traditional snack, you can **support your body by keeping your blood sugar stable and your appetite satiated**, which in turn will keep you on track toward your health goals. When you choose snacks that are calorie dense rather than nutrient dense, you will feel it, both in your **energy level** and possibly your **waistline**.

Looking for a few mini meal snacks to keep you on track? Try one of these:

- A handful of **almonds** and a piece of **fruit**
- Whole grain **crackers with nut butter**
- A bowl of **black bean soup**
- A **hummus sandwich** on half of a whole wheat pita with cucumbers and tomatoes
- An ounce of cheddar **cheese** and **apple wedges**
- Or, why not have that **yogurt parfait**?

By Beth Rosen, MS, RD



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