

Snacking is Good for You!

Food Wise by Ginny Erwin MS, RD, CPT
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“To snack or not to snack?” That is the question I get a lot from clients and friends. Is it better to eat three square meals a day, or 5 or 6 mini-meals? Recent studies show that for better blood sugar control, and to help prevent binge eating, snacking can be a healthful thing to do. Eating healthful snacks, such as a piece of fruit, string cheese, a glass of low-fat chocolate milk, or a cup of yogurt can enhance your overall diet. Because healthy snacking helps you manage hunger by balancing blood sugars.

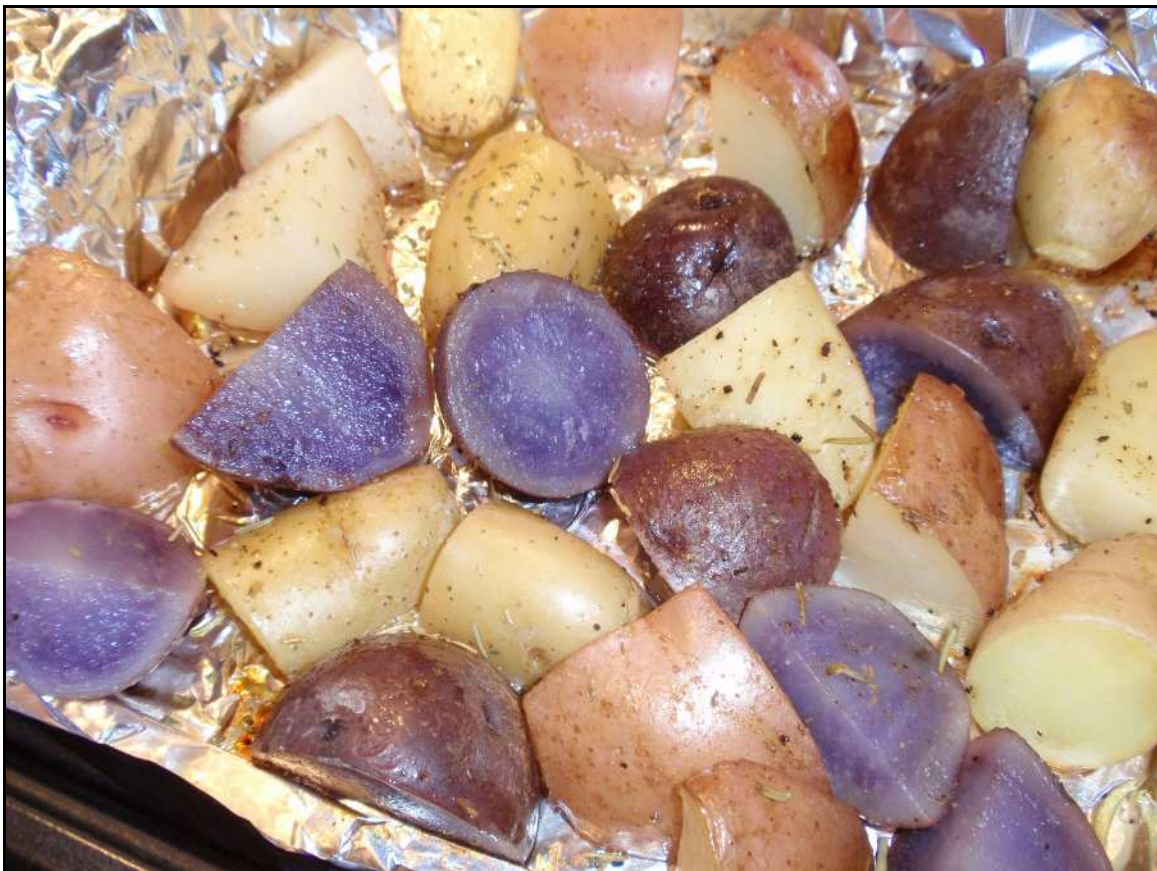
Studies confirm that when adults or children skip breakfast, they tend to perform poorly both physically and mentally. Skipping breakfast usually leads to eating higher calorie foods and making poor food decisions, due to the fact that the body needs fuel right away. Unfortunately in America, skipping breakfast is very common, and skipping lunch may also follow that trend. It is always better for your body and your waist line to “front load” your food intake when your body needs it most. A good rule of thumb is to eat about 50-60% of your daily food intake before 2 PM. This is where planning your snacks throughout the morning and afternoon can be beneficial to your overall health. By making healthy snack choices, you can provide your body with the extra nutrients and energy that it needs. This can also help prevent binge eating episodes.

What is the perfect snack? The perfect snack depends on your own individual tastes and preferences. There are no right or wrong food choices — it should be based on what you like, not what your friend is eating on her current fad diet. There are no special formulas or magical foods to make your snack better than what you could get at your corner grocery store. One way that can help you make a better choice is to think of the components that make up a good snack. A little protein, a little carbohydrate, and a little good fat will provide you with a nutrient-dense snack. For instance, apple slices with a tablespoon of nut butter. A half of turkey sandwich on multigrain bread with a dab of low-fat mayo and some lettuce

and cucumber. Notice how these choices are specific and portioned out. A snack is not a meal. A snack is an “energy bridge” that will get you through to your next meal. It helps prevent you from bingeing on whatever is front of you when you get home from a hard day’s work. Lastly, if you do happen to snack in front of your computer or television, make sure you portion out the snack. Do not sit down with a bag or box of anything. Measure it in a small bowl (remember, it’s a snack).

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See Ginny’s “Red, White & Blue Potatoes” recipe and nutrition facts on next page »



Red, White & Blue Potatoes

