

Sugary Snacks

Sugar is a naturally occurring nutrient that makes food taste sweet. Babies develop their first tastes around sweetness in mother's milk or formula milk. When a toddler hurts himself, very rarely will you see a parent offering the child a boiled potato to placate him, but rather something sweet. Our sweet tooth is linked to basic human behaviour.

Eating sugar is not essentially bad for you. It is a carbohydrate and like bread and pasta it contains only four calories per gram. In the world of modern and processed food, sucrose often goes hand in hand with fat. It is the **overindulgence** in sugary and high fat foods, combined with a lack of physical activity that contributes to weight gain.

Snacking has a place in the lives of most people and there is nothing wrong with that. Where snacking can become a problem is when the amount and types of foods are inappropriate.

Inappropriate snacking can most commonly lead to weight gain but it can also create and perpetuate a cycle of food craving, hunger and over eating.

Put simply; eating more calories than you use up will lead to weight gain. Snacks high in sugar and fat can tip the balance quite easily – they are highly calorific but sometimes you wouldn't think so!

Also, snacks containing lots of added sugar can wreak havoc with your blood sugar levels – leaving you feeling hungry again only half an hour after a snack.

For children in particular, sugary snacks have a huge role to play in dental cavities. Try to only give sugary foods at the end of a meal and not in between meals.

Next time you fancy a snack give the following foods a miss:

- Sweets and chocolates,
- Biscuits, cakes and pastries,
- Chips, crisps and pies,
- Fizzy drinks and squashes,
- Flapjacks & cereal bars.

Snacks that are naturally low in fat tend to have fewer calories and are more friendly on the waist line. A warning though, watch out for reduced fat versions of traditionally high fat foods – they tend to have a similar amount of calories but more added sugar than the 'full fat' version to make them taste better. Always try to check out the food label: a lot of sugar is 10g per 100g; better is less than 2g per 100g. A lot of fat is 20g per 100g; better is less than 3g per 100g.

Choosing snacks with slower release energy or less added sugar, rather than snacks with lots of added sugar, will help you to break the food craving, hunger and over eating cycle.

Try one of the following as a snack (these are all around 125 – 150 calories):

- A low fat yoghurt,
- Slice of wholemeal toast or a crumpet with a teaspoon of jam or marmalade,
- Piece of fruit (as low as 40 calories depending on what you choose!)
- Handful of dried fruit,

- Small bowl of wholegrain cereal and milk,
- 1 banana with 2 tablespoons of low fat yoghurt,
- One hot cross bun,
- A glass of fruit smoothie,
- 5 Brazil nuts or walnuts.

Have a look at the following snack swaps to see how much you could save:

Snack	Healthier swap	Calorie saving	Sugar saving	Fat saving
2 Digestive biscuits	2 rice cakes	84	3.4g	5g
Chocolate bar	Mini chocolate swiss roll	184	20g	12g
Doughnut	Hot cross bun	96	7g	2g
Chewy sweets 25g	Raisins 25g	30	3g	1g
Slice of carrot cake (85g)	Slice of toast with reduced fat spread and jam	67	14g	8g
Can cola	Glass smoothie	5	9g	-