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Rethinking Your Evening Snack

In our very busy lives, we often find ourselves eating on the go or eating close to when we go to bed. Although it is understandable (who wants to go to bed hungry, right?), eating too late can lead to a variety of health issues. At some point, everyone has eaten a meal or a snack right before bed. Whether it is due to your busy schedule, feeling hungry, or mindless snacking, it is not the best for your health to just eat. There is good news though. If you watch what you eat, even light snacks before bed do not cause many problems.

The first question you need to ask yourself is, are you actually hungry? Many people often eat in the evening out of boredom, habit, or because of stress. If you truly are hungry, it is okay to have a snack in the evening. The best options for evening snacks are small portion foods with a high amount of protein and fiber. When eating these foods slowly, in small portions, and without distraction, you can meet your hunger needs without following the bad habit of mindless eating.

Laying down before fully digesting foods can cause discomfort leading to “burping up food.” This is especially true if you eat certain types of foods. Foods you should try to avoid to get a good night’s rest are; spicy foods like peppers, acidic foods like oranges, caffeinated foods like coffee and chocolate, high fat/calorie foods like pizza or burgers, sugary foods like candy, and alcohol like wine or beer. While it is best to give yourself enough time to fully digest before laying down, some foods are healthier than others to eat in the evening.

Picking an evening snack is important. You need to find something to satisfy your hunger without causing sleep or health issues. The general rule to follow when snacking in the evening is to pick something high in fiber and protein while around 200 calories or less. Eating a snack high in fiber allows your body to slowly digest the food. High protein snacks will help you feel full faster. Keeping the snack under 200 calories will help you get to sleep on time and help you control weight gain.

The [Healthline](https://www.healthline.com) website (healthline.com) has a good list of healthy evening snacks. Some of the recommendations may be obvious, while others are new. Their recommendations range from fruits and seeds (ex. cherries and pistachios) to more substantial snacks (ex. hot cereal and protein smoothies). Basically, any fiber rich, minimally processed food, makes for a good, easy, and healthy evening snack.

When it comes to rethinking your evening snack, it is important to keep healthier snacks readily available in your home. Two of the drivers of unhealthy evening snacking is having only unhealthy snacks available or needing to go out later in the evening to get something. Many people are more tempted to go to the nearest fast-food drive-through or run into the nearest convenience store for an evening snack. Most of these options available would fall into the unhealthy category for evening snacking.

Please contact me to schedule an appointment or for more information, contact Tyler Johnson, tajohnson120@ksu.edu, or by calling 620-232-1930.

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