

Introduction

Eat Up! It's Healthy

1

“I know what to do; I just don't know how to do it!”

This is what nearly all of my clients tell me during our first meeting. And these days, it's true—there is no shortage of information about how to eat a healthy, well-balanced diet. In

fact, when it comes to food, my typical client is incredibly smart. He or she has usually read dozens of books and magazine articles on health and nutrition, spent hours examining the ingredient labels on the food he or she consumes, and agonized over what counts as a “good” or “bad” fat. She's had more conversations about carbs than most people have had about politics, religion, or where to go on their next vacation. What's more, my average client has tried—and usually given up on—upward of five diets!

And I don't just mean formal diets from the bestseller lists, from grapefruit to cabbage to all-protein to blood type. (Trust me, I've seen refugees from every diet known to man.)

These busy, on-the-go people, who are usually very happy and successful in most areas of their lives, have poured amazing amounts of time and energy into developing their personal eating systems, too. You probably know the kinds of eating plans I mean: “I'll only eat pretzels.” Or “I'll be good all week, and eat what I want on weekends.” Or “I'll be good all day, and then splurge at dinner.” Or when imagination fails them and they completely run out of ideas, they vow to not eat *anything*. Then they wonder why they collapse in a frazzled heap in front of the office vending machine at 4:00 P.M., and find themselves tearing through a bag of Doritos.

The belief that we'll finally hit on the perfect diet just for us is why dieting has become a multibillion-dollar industry. But if there's one thing I think all of us can agree on, it is that those plans just aren't working. That's why people hire me to help them change the way they eat and why you're looking at this book right now. Chances are, just like my clients when they first come to see me, you want to lose weight and haven't been able to do it on your own. And chances are, you're more than a little ticked off about it. But please understand that you're not alone: *60 percent of America is overweight*. Now, go back and reread that last sentence. I know it's a statistic you've already heard a million times. But what that 60 percent means is that, even though we're armed with all this great information about nutrition, being overweight is more common than being healthy. Put another way, only four out of ten American adults are able to control their weight.

So what makes all these smart people—who are so successful

in other ways—fail? When I take a look at my clients’ diets, I notice two major errors, both part of a common theme that I believe is undermining America’s effort to get back into its “thin” jeans. Despite all their knowledge about dieting, they’re lousy snackers. They are making two mistakes:

2 | THE SNACK FACTOR DIET

1. Snacking poorly. Maybe they choose seemingly harmless foods, such as pretzels or granola, which turn out to deliver plenty of empty calories and leave them hungry again before they know it. Or they eat junk food—stuff they know is bad for them but is easy and available. And these poor snack choices don’t just affect their weight and caloric intake. They contribute to fluctuating blood sugar and crashing energy levels, all of which set people up to make self-defeating food choices the next chance they get.

And beyond the day-to-day damage of poor snacking, there are long-term health consequences, including heart disease. OK, I know it may sound pretty doom-and-gloom of me to say that your 3:00 P.M. M&M habit is affecting your life expectancy, but it’s true. After all, it’s the little habits we have that add up to our overall health picture and contribute to future heart disease! And it is the small changes you make daily that have the most profound effects.

2. Not snacking at all. By not snacking—even though it may make them feel virtuous—they are disrupting their blood sugar levels, which almost always results in overeating at their next meal. This, in turn, affects their weight (which goes up) and energy level (which goes down). They end up eating whatever is available first, which often means nutritionally bankrupt food choices. (Anyone who’s ever consumed double helpings of a food he or she doesn’t even like knows exactly what I mean!) And what’s worse, because overeating feels so normal, these people often blunt their awareness of the number-one weight-loss tool *all* of us have: the ability to recognize when we’re no longer hungry and stop eating.

Introduction | 3

THE RIGHT SNACKS ARE JUST RIGHT

Wait a minute, you’re thinking, *So, snacking is not good and not snacking is not good?* No! *The Snack Factor Diet* will show you how the right snacks—nutrient-dense foods, eaten at the right times of day—will *anchor your health*, steady your mood, and make weight loss as easy as possible. That’s what this book is all about—changing the way you think of the word *snack*. Right now, to you, *snack* probably means a tasty extra, something “good” dieters should do without, even if it is only a 100-calorie pack!

And who could blame you for misunderstanding the word? After all, the snack food industry is a multibillion-dollar industry;

Americans spend about \$6 billion a year on potato chips alone and \$37 billion on soft drinks! For most of us, snack foods have been guilty pleasures, whether our tastes run to salty foods (chips and pretzels) or to sweets (cookies and candy). Either way, we've gotten used to thinking of them as plain old calories, and we don't expect anything more from them than a false sense of fullness that will maybe last us to the next meal, when we'll eat *real* food.

Not only are the foods most of us think of as snack foods terrible food choices (don't worry—I'm going to teach you that snacks are real food, too, and introduce you to hundreds of delicious, wholesome, and easy snacks in Chapter 5), but we've fallen in love with eating them in an unhealthy way. Sometimes, we get tricked by packaging, like those 100-calorie bags of cookies. My clients confess that most of the time they're gobbling these extra calories mindlessly, while they're on the move or doing something else. Eating is done without much consciousness, nibbling as they answer e-mails, drive to pick up the kids, or wait to get their hair colored. It seems as if there's never any time to think about what we are putting in

4 | THE SNACK FACTOR DIET

our bodies, let alone why we are putting it there. I am here to help you with that!

I teach my clients that to get to the weight they want—and into the clothes they love—they need to do what this country likes best, and that's snack. But we need to snack smarter. By the time you've finished reading this book, the word *snack* will have taken on an entirely new meaning. Smart snacking will become your secret weapon and your passport to the weight you want to be. Within just three days, the Snack Factor Diet will help you

- Lose weight
- Improve energy
- Stabilize blood sugar levels—no more mood swings throughout the day!
- Prevent constipation (keep you “regular”)

And that's just for starters. Before you finish this fourweek plan, you'll have made real progress in meeting longerterm goals, as well. You will have started to

- Prevent heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers
- Improve your skin
- Protect against aging
- Sharpen your mental skills
- Get happy—literally!

At this point, my clients generally roll their eyes and think, “She *must* be exaggerating.” But I'm not. As a registered dietician who's devoted years of my life to understanding the science behind snacking, I can tell you that snacking is truly the Holy Grail of nutrition, with plenty of solid science behind it. Much of the evidence boils down to the power of *satiety*, a

buzzword that will change your diet destiny forever. Simply put, it means how satisfied (or “satiated”) you feel by any given food.

Remember the last time you ate a handful of jellybeans and how quickly you devoured 150 calories worth? (That’s only about thirty-seven of those minuscule Jelly Belly beans!) Was your craving satisfied? Or did you dive back into the bag, again and again, for just one more handful? Now, remember the last time you ate some peanut butter? Sure, you knew it was high in calories. But one spoonful on your toast was probably enough to keep you going all morning.

Chalk up the difference to satiety and get ready because *The Snack Factor Diet* is going to turn you on to literally hundreds of snack possibilities that will leave you so satisfied that you can get back to living your life and quit worrying about what you’ll eat at your next meal.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND *THE SNACK FACTOR DIET*

It’s as simple as this: snacking properly improves satiety. A study from a medical school in South Africa measured it this way: One group of healthy men ate breakfast in a single meal, while another group was given the same identical meal, but at intervals throughout the morning. When both groups sat down to lunch, the snackers weren’t as hungry and ate smaller lunches than the big-breakfast group. And even better, they felt just as satisfied as if they had eaten a high-calorie lunch. Another study tracked a group of French adults and found that they ate, on average, 2.7 meals and 1.3 snacks each day. The satiety ratio was higher for snacks than for meals, and snacks consumed in the afternoon were found to be especially satisfying.

Much of the groundbreaking research on snacking, and

6 | THE SNACK FACTOR DIET

how eating frequency affects not just satiety but also metabolism, comes from France, where many people customarily eat a fourth meal each day, usually in the afternoon. Studies found that when regular fourth-meal eaters gave up that afternoon snack, they gained weight because they overate at other meals. And those who continued to eat four meals a day had a better metabolic profile, with a reduction in the secretion of insulin, an improvement in insulin resistance, and better blood glucose control.

Of course, those changes to the metabolic profile are huge for someone struggling to control diabetes (which unfortunately, thanks to our weight struggles, includes more Americans every day). But how eating frequency affects our insulin levels concerns anyone trying to manage his or her weight. And while certainly not all nutrition experts agree on this,

many feel that the spiking and plunging insulin levels that come from sporadic eating affect mood and can make us irritable, tense, depressed, and even shaky.

Snacking—by getting people away from the self-defeating habits of starving and then stuffing themselves—also seems to shrink people’s stomachs. One study tracked obese people on a very low-calorie diet for four weeks, and researchers found a reduction in stomach size that ranged from 27 to 36 percent. So it makes sense that people who eat smaller, more frequent, meals will begin to feel more satisfied with less food over time. (We’ll get into food timing more in Chapter 1.) Some people are lucky enough to develop this smartsnacking skill without thinking about it. A study of more than 3,200 men and women, conducted by Arizona State University, found that “multiple snackers”—people who naturally snack throughout the day when they are hungry, as I suggest my clients do—might just be inherently smarter about their food choices. These snackers made more prudent decisions

Introduction | 7

about how much protein, cholesterol, calcium, and sodium they consumed each day, compared to people who never snacked or people who snacked only at one time each day (as during late-night *Seinfeld* reruns).

Research has also confirmed how snacking helps heart health. One clinical trial, for example, compared two groups of people eating the same diet. The first group ate six meals a day; the second group had the same foods in equal amounts, but they were served in irregular patterns, anywhere from three to nine meals a day. The results were impressive: smaller, more frequent meals resulted in lower LDL cholesterol (a.k.a. the bad stuff), by reducing cholesterol synthesis in the liver. Total cholesterol fell 9 percent and LDL fell 14 percent. French studies have also shown that more frequent eaters have better lipid profiles.

THE BUSY PERSON’S DIET

There’s another big scientific benefit from the Snack Factor Diet: it helps really busy people—the kind who tend to eat sporadically because of demanding jobs and crazy schedules—get into a regular eating routine. Research has demonstrated that for people trying to lose weight, the kind of routine eating that will become second nature on the Snack Factor Diet makes it easier to consume fewer calories, burn more calories after you eat, and promote steadier insulin levels; that means no more of those mood swings that so often come along with frantic I’ll-just-grab-a-bite-on-the-way-to-my-next-appointment days.

I’m going to repeat that because it’s such good news. The

Snack Factor Diet will become second nature. Because this book will coach you not just on what to eat but also on the behavioral changes that go along with effective snacking,

8 | THE SNACK FACTOR DIET

you'll be more likely to keep the weight off once you've lost it.

Best of all, snacking makes us happier. Researchers at the University of Wales divided a group of 150 women into three groups: one got no breakfast, one got a small breakfast (with 10 grams of carbs), and one got a larger meal (50 grams of carbs). After an hour and half, half of each breakfasting group also got a snack. Not only did the snack group report being in a better mood (and isn't that enough of a reason to start snacking, right now?), they were also sharper mentally and did better on a word-recall task that researchers gave them.

The point is that as long as we do not consume more calories (energy) than we use up, and we only eat when we are hungry (monitor your Hunger Quotient, or HQ), it's useful to split our total energy intake into as many nutrient-dense meals (designed to provide satiety) as our busy lives allow. And that's exactly what *The Snack Factor Diet* will teach you how to do.

WHAT'S AHEAD

In the next chapters, you will learn how to

- Monitor your *HQ* so that you know exactly when you need to eat
- Eat foods in the right *proportion* (protein, carbs, and fat)
- Choose *nutrient-dense* food for your snacks and meals to get the most out of the portions you eat
- Eat the right amount—*portions*—of these nutrient-dense foods to keep you supersatisfied, but not stuffed

Then in Chapter 5, you'll be guided through the Snack Factor Diet, which begins with a three-day “deprogramming”

Introduction | 9

(of bad diet habits). You'll be able to construct your own meals and snacks from hundreds of choices, or you can follow the menus that I provide for you.

And when all is read and done, you will change the way you eat—forever!