



THE BEST & WORST TOP 13 SNACKS

#1 Best: Hard-boiled eggs

Eggs are a quick, high-quality source of protein, making them an ideal alternative to common snack foods that are heavy in refined carbs and added sugars. But they are also one of the best sources of two anti-inflammatory nutrients, selenium and choline. In fact, **two eggs** provide 50% of our daily needs for both. Cook a batch at the start of the week to keep on hand in the refrigerator for snack time (here's **the best way to boil an egg**).

#2 Best: Guacamole

You can't go wrong with an avocado-based dip—from both a taste and health perspective! Packed with monounsaturated fats (read: the good kind), avocado is also a good source of fiber and vitamin E, two nutrients that help tamp down inflammation (learn more about **what makes avocados so healthy**). Make guac from scratch or buy 100-calories packs for easy portion control. Serve with baby carrots or a few whole-grain tortilla chips.

#3 Best: Toasted Chickpeas

The next time you're craving something salty and crunchy, skip the chips and crackers and reach for toasted chickpeas instead. They're easy to **season and roast at home**, but you can also find packaged varieties ranging in flavors from ranch to barbecue at the grocery store. (We love **these ones from Biena!**) From an anti-inflammatory standpoint, these crunchy chickpeas are an ideal source of complex carbs that have a lower impact on glucose when eaten in place of more processed snacks.

#4 Best: Black Bean Soup

Don't forget not-so-traditional snack foods like a cup of black bean soup, especially if you're needing something nutritious and filling. **Black bean soup** (or any other legume-based soup like minestrone or vegetable) is also a great way to get more fiber, plant-based protein and vegetables—characteristics all associated with lower levels of inflammation. Just make sure to look for lower-sodium options.

#5 Best: Nut Butters

Single-serving packages of nut butters (like Justin's) are a portable solution to have a source of protein and healthy fats at snacktime. Spread it over apple or pear slices, celery sticks or eat it by itself. Packages of nut butter are great when you need a more filling snack or are craving something a little salty and sweet.

#6 Best: Dark Chocolate Squares

Some days call for a bite of something sweet, so when this happens, opt for a 1-ounce serving of dark chocolate. Look for a chocolate made with 60% or more cacao for one of the anti-inflammatory polyphenols, and look for one with only a few grams of added sugar (we love these **Ghirardelli squares from Target, \$5**). And if you need a more filling sweet treat, try topping a chocolate square with a little nut butter or opting for a treat with both (like these **dark chocolate peanut butter cups from Justin's, \$5**).

#7 Best: Lightly Salted Roasted Almonds

Nuts are sources of anti-inflammatory omega-3s, magnesium and fiber, and eating 1 to 2 ounces daily is associated with decreased inflammation connected to several chronic diseases. Because portion size is key, buy a large bag of lightly salted roasted almonds, or other favorite nut, and pre-portion in small containers. Another option is to buy 100-calorie packs. This helps daily intake from going overboard, but also makes nuts portable and convenient to get in that daily serving. **(We love these mixed nut packs from Planters, \$6 at Target.)**

#8 Best: Hummus

Craving something more savory? **Creamy hummus** is a perfect snack dip for raw veggies like baby carrots, bell pepper strips and sugar snap peas to help get an extra veggie serving in. This is important since getting at least five produce servings in daily is one of the best eating approaches when it comes to reducing inflammation. And since chickpeas form the dip's base, hummus is also a good way to add a little fiber and protein.

#9 Worst: Microwave Popcorn

Popcorn is a whole-grain snack that all ages love, but throwing a packaged bag in the microwave isn't the best option for health. This is because microwaveable bags often contain extra chemicals, flavorings and sometimes even hydrogenated fats, any of which can trigger inflammation.

Instead: We love popping popcorn (like **this variety pack from WW**) on the stovetop or in an air-popper (**\$20, Bed Bath & Beyond**). Or, make your own microwave version following these directions for **Homemade Microwave Popcorn** or **Everything Bagel Microwave Popcorn**.

#10 Worst: Crunchy orange snacks (other than veggies)

The orange powder and coating found on snack foods like chips, cheese puffs and cheese curls are full of artificial compounds and chemicals for color and flavor, and any one of these can act as an irritant to the body and trigger inflammation. Add in less-healthy fat sources, possibly even trans fats, and the inflammatory potential goes up.

Instead: Craving cheesy flavor? A 1-ounce serving of cheese is a better choice, even with its saturated fat. If you're craving salty crunch, opt for nuts, crispy chickpeas, popcorn or whole-grain crackers.

#11 Worst: Chocolate chip granola bars

With many bars coming providing 150 to 200 calories, little to no protein and fiber and 10g or more of added sugar, most store-bought granola bars don't offer much more nutritionally than a candy bar. And the added sugar can cause spikes and dips in blood glucose, a factor that is associated with increased risk for many inflammatory conditions.

Instead: Opt for bars or balls that are primarily nut-based and that have minimal added sugars such as KIND bars or something comparable. A KIND Dark Chocolate Nuts Sea Salt bar (**\$8 for 6 bars, Target**) has 180 calories, 7g fiber, 6g protein and 4g added sugar. Or, make a homemade version like these **Savory Date & Pistachio Bites**.

#12 Worst: Buttery crackers

A stack of buttery, round crackers doesn't really fill you up. Plus, they're also pretty devoid of good-for-you nutrients. Most crackers and grain-based snacks are made primarily of refined flour, and often have added flavors, colors or hydrogenated fats.

Instead: Choose a 100% whole-grain cracker or snack that contains ingredients you recognize or popcorn. We like **these ones from Thrive Market, \$4**. Or even better, choose carb-based foods that have a lower impact on blood sugar—like chickpeas or veggies with guacamole or hummus.

#13 Worst: Specialty coffee drinks

A mid-afternoon drink made with sugar and caffeine is tempting, but this snack choice actually aggravates existing inflammation, thanks to the sugar and to how the caffeine can impact your sleep that night. Even if

you don't notice a difference, afternoon caffeine causes many to spend less time in that deep restorative sleep that the body needs.

Instead: Go for a spiced tea or a mug of herbal tea, and keep added sugar to a minimum. Tea leaves contain polyphenolic compounds associated with lower inflammatory markers in the body. We love [chamomile-lavender](#) or [licorice root tea](#) for a caffeine-free treat.

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