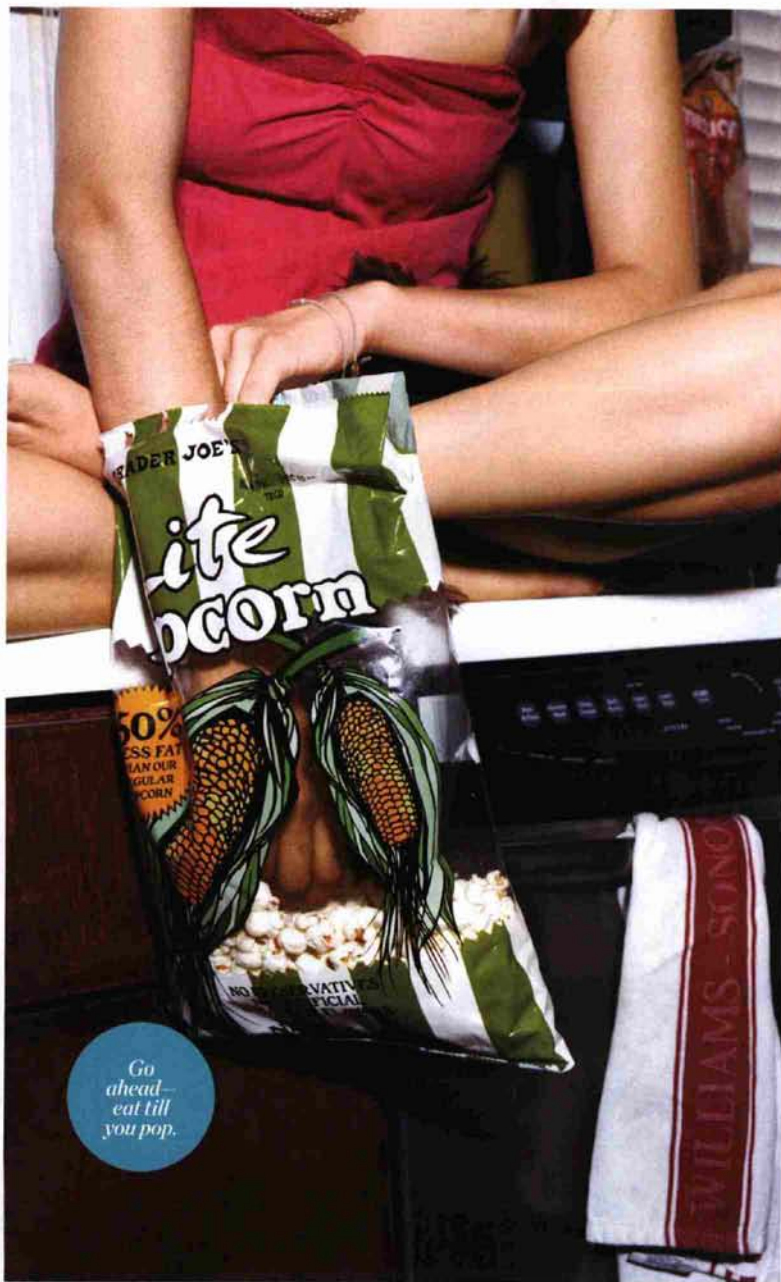


Drop 10 pounds by snacking

These magical munchies let you pig out and lose pudge

By Shelley Levitt Photographs by Ture Lillegraven



Go ahead—
eat till
you pop.

Snacking when you're trying to lose weight is like having premium cable on a budget: When it's time to cut back, they're the first things to go. But swearing off between-meal eats can actually have an adverse effect on your waistline: "Studies show that people who avoid eating between meals may end up consuming more calories overall," says WH weight-loss advisor Keri Glassman, R.D., author of *The Snack Factor Diet*. "When you're famished, your blood sugar is low and your defenses are down, so you don't necessarily make the best choices." As a nation of snack addicts with no sign of reforming—according to data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 1999–2002, women snack more than twice a day, at around 192 calories a pop—it's time to embrace our need to nibble.

To snack without adding bulk to your backside, fill your cupboard with foods that have built-in firepower. Here are three snacking strategies that come with a no-gorge guarantee:

Just add air

Foods that are pumped full of air make your stomach feel inflated without giving you a beach-ball belly. In a study published last year in the journal *Appetite*, Barbara Rolls, Ph.D., author of *The Volumetrics Eating Plan* and the director of the Laboratory

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Popchips

Potato, corn, and rice chips with 20 percent fewer calories than traditional chips
120 calories per ounce

Cheetos Natural White Cheddar Puffs

150 calories per ounce

Quaker Caramel Corn Quakes

Rice snacks
80 calories for 7 cakes

for the Study of Human Ingestive Behavior at Penn State, served visitors to her lab either crunchy cheese snacks or more aerated puffy cheese snacks. Those munching the puffer snacks consumed nearly 75 percent more by volume, but they took in 20 percent fewer calories. "When something is full of air, an equal amount looks bigger, so people tend to take in fewer calories," Rolls says. If you nosh on air-puffed snacks, you'll be able to eat more without your gut suffering the consequences—and you can stretch your snack over an entire episode of *Mad Men* instead of blowing it all in the first commercial break.

Think thick

As far as your muffin top is concerned, all calories are created equal. But your brain plays favorites. "Liquids don't seem to trigger the same response in metabolism and hunger suppression that solids do," says Susan Swithers, Ph.D., of Purdue University's Ingestive Behavior Research Center. "You're consuming calories, but your brain doesn't really register them, so you still feel hungry and can overeat without realizing it." The good news: Experts speculate that thicker liquids, such as smoothies, are recognized as food by your brain's appetite center, so they can help you get to that couldn't-eat-another-bite feeling.

Dutch researchers backed up the idea with a study published this year in the

International Journal of Obesity. After offering unlimited amounts of chocolate in three forms—milk, custard, and a beverage with a consistency between the two—they found (in addition to, we bet, a lot of eager volunteers) that those who had the chocolate milk consumed 30 percent more calories than those who ate the pudding. The midconsistency mixture fared somewhere in the middle.

Spice it up

Spices have a good track record as a weight-loss tool. One study showed that spiking soup with a big dose of red pepper led to consuming fewer calories in subsequent meals. Not only does the hot sensation slow you down, pepper may cause thermogenesis

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Trader Joe's wasabi peas
120 calories per ¼ cup

Applegate Farms Natural Joy Sticks
100 calories per stick

One bell pepper cut into quarters and topped with spicy **Pace Thick & Chunky Salsa**
15 calories each

Whole jalapeños stuffed with garden vegetable **Philadelphia ½ Less Fat Cream Cheese**
74 calories each

(your body literally heats up, burning a few extra calories in the process). Another reason to kick it up a notch: Food scientists in Taiwan report that capsaicin, the compound that gives red pepper its pow, may prove lethal to fat cells, killing them before they can fully form. There's common sense as well as science at work here, says Judith S. Stern, Sc.D., a professor of nutrition and internal medicine at the University of California, Davis. "You simply can't eat spicy cuisine quickly."

SOUND OFF

WHAT CAN'T YOU STOP EATING/WHY NOT? TELL US AT WOMENSHEALTHMAG.COM/SOUNDOFF.

Can't stop at one?

The science behind self-control

Your inability to put on the brakes when you're chomping something yummy is about more than wimpy willpower. Evidence suggests that we evolved to crave fattening food. "Our taste buds have special sets of receptors that pick up flavors associated with calorie-dense foods, and even newborn babies are born with a desire for sweet things," says Gary

Beauchamp, Ph.D., director of Philadelphia's Monell Chemical Senses Center. Our hairy human ancestors were mostly herbivores—today they'd be called vegans—and getting enough calories was a daily struggle. To avoid starving to death, they had to learn to recognize calorie- and nutrient-dense foods by their taste and texture. As a result, we inherited a powerful hankering for anything sweet (a sure sign of energy-boosting sugar) or fatty (a guarantee of precious calories).

Now that we're no longer digging up roots, picking berries, and chasing woolly mammoths, calorie-dense foods are more of a curse than a blessing. Further proof that Mother Nature is determined to foil your weight-loss plans: Fat combined with salt or sugar gives your mouth the flavor equivalent of an orgasm, so sugary, high-fat foods (like ice cream) and salty, high-fat foods (like Doritos) are especially delectable, says food scientist Mary Ellen Camire, Ph.D. Seem depressing? Chin up—evolution may have stacked the deck, but ultimately you deal the cards.

Those cravings? Blame evolution.



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Jell-O sugar-free pudding cups
dark chocolate and raspberry
60 calories per 3.75 oz

Mott's Plus Sauce cups
pomegranate
50 calories per 3.9 oz

Dannon Light & Fit 0% Plus, vanilla flavor
50 calories per 4 oz