

A New Kind of Snack

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What if I told you that a certain kind of snack could reduce blood sugar and improve cardiovascular health? Approximately 1/10 Americans have diabetes and 1/3 have prediabetes. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in our country. If a “snack” could reduce your risk of these outcomes, wouldn't that be worthwhile?

Most people don't expect to hear their doctor recommend snacking - don't worry, we're not going too far off script. While I could and do recommend specific kinds of food snacks (think produce aisle), what I'm referring to here are what are called “exercise snacks.”

Exercise snacks are short bits of activity throughout the day and there is ample evidence of the benefits of this new way of thinking about activity. Exercise snacks will be especially beneficial to people who are sedentary or less active for much of the day, but can even have health benefits to those who work out in larger chunks regularly. The emerging science of short exercise shows

benefits in increasing activity in episodes as short as one minute. And there is even evidence that walking for 10 minutes three times in a day can be more impactful than walking for 30 minutes once.

There are multiple ways that exercise snacks can be helpful. Movement stimulates blood circulation and causes muscles to utilize and uptake glucose, reducing blood sugar, for example. Taking a short walk outside has additional benefits due to fresh air, sunshine and changing your visual perspective. These changes can impact your nervous system to reduce the impact of stress and potentially reduce blood pressure.

The CDC identifies lack of physical exercise as one of the key lifestyle risks to developing chronic disease. Exercise snacks are a great way to start and maintain physical activity. It is highly recommended that you choose activities that are in alignment with your current fitness, stamina and strength and build to more vigorous activities gradually. Some ways you could incorporate exercise

snacks into your day-to-day life include:

- Using a sit/stand desk
- Taking a break from sitting once an hour to walk around or stretch
- Going for a walk on your lunch break
- Walking your dog a couple times a day
- Putting on your favorite song and having a short dance party
- Hula hooping
- Using a few hand weights or resistance bands to do a few resistance exercises
- Jumping jacks
- Going up and down a flight of stairs

Whatever form of movement you decide to do, choose something that you enjoy and start gently. Keep your activity in very achievable and sustainable amounts to avoid injury, have some success and keep your



new habit sustainable. Remember, as little as one minute can make a difference. If that's where you start, that's one minute more than yesterday. Enjoy a snack today!



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