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## Research Proves Shopping Hungry Leads to Higher Calorie Purchasing

By Andrea Holwegner BSc, RD

You may have guessed that going grocery shopping when you are hungry might lead to purchasing more. A new research study in the JAMA Internal Medicine in May 2013 by researchers Dr. Aner Tal and Dr. Brian Wansink found this was indeed the case.

### What do we know about deprivation and how our brain responds to different foods?

Previous research has shown that food deprivation and fasting leads to higher activation in the reward centers of the brain in response to higher calorie foods than lower calorie foods. Research has also shown that fasting 18 hours leads to consumption of higher calorie foods.

### What about short term fasting such as skipping a meal or a snack, does this lead to overeating?

The new research study in May 2013 published in JAMA Internal Medicine shows that short term deprivation such as skipping a meal can indeed alter our grocery shopping habits. Both online shoppers and shoppers at a grocery store selected higher calorie food choices when they had not eaten for over 5 hours. The research study also found that shopping between 4-7pm lead to less low-calorie food choices being selected than after lunch (between 1-4pm).



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This research shows if you are struggling with your weight you may want to consider having a healthy snack before grocery shopping and if your schedule allows, consider shopping at your least hungry times of the day (which may be before 4pm if you are similar to the research study participants).

### Given shopping hungry can potentially influence what we buy and choosing to eat higher calorie foods how often should we eat?

Firstly keep in mind a general rule of thumb to eat every 3-5 hours. This means some people will choose to eat three larger meals per day and others will choose to eat six mini meals throughout the day (or some variation in between). Fueling your body regularly helps to maintain good productivity through your workday and helps prevent overeating later in the day. If you arrive home from work, at a grocery store or at a restaurant in a “hangry” state (combination of hungry and angry) it is really difficult to make healthier choices and manage portion sizes. At that point you are relying on willpower when it is far easier to rely on brainpower of planning to have a snack. For most people a snack between lunch and supper is critical since energy levels are falling and it will likely be longer than 3-5 hour stretch with no food.

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## What are some healthy snack choices?

When you are thinking about planning a healthy snack choice especially in the afternoon where people are prone to arriving home too hungry and making poor choices think about marrying carbohydrate with protein. Carbohydrates is the sole energy source for your brain and protein choices help to sustain energy and fullness longer. Given most of my clients are low in vegetables, fruits and calcium rich choices you may want to think about some of these as potential options.

### Some healthy snack examples:

1. Apple and cheese
2. Handful of nuts and a piece of fresh fruit
3. Latte or tea latte with a banana
4. Whole grain crackers and cheese
5. Greek salad or caprese salad
6. Yogurt parfait
7. Smoothie with fruit and a source of protein (milk, yogurt, hemp hearts or protein powder)
8. Handful of trail mix
9. Dried fruit bar and Greek yogurt
10. Cottage cheese and fresh or unsweetened canned pineapple
11. Hardboiled egg and homemade muffin
12. Raw veggies and hummus

Reference: <http://archinte.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1685889>

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*Andrea Holwegner, known as the Chocoholic Dietitian, is founder and president of Health Stand Nutrition Consulting Inc., a member of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers and a media expert for the Dietitians of Canada. For nutrition counselling information and to sign up for a free monthly newsletter loaded with nutrition tips, recipes and more visit [www.healthstandnutrition.com](http://www.healthstandnutrition.com). Twitter @chocoholicRD.*

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