

Healthy Eating During Exams

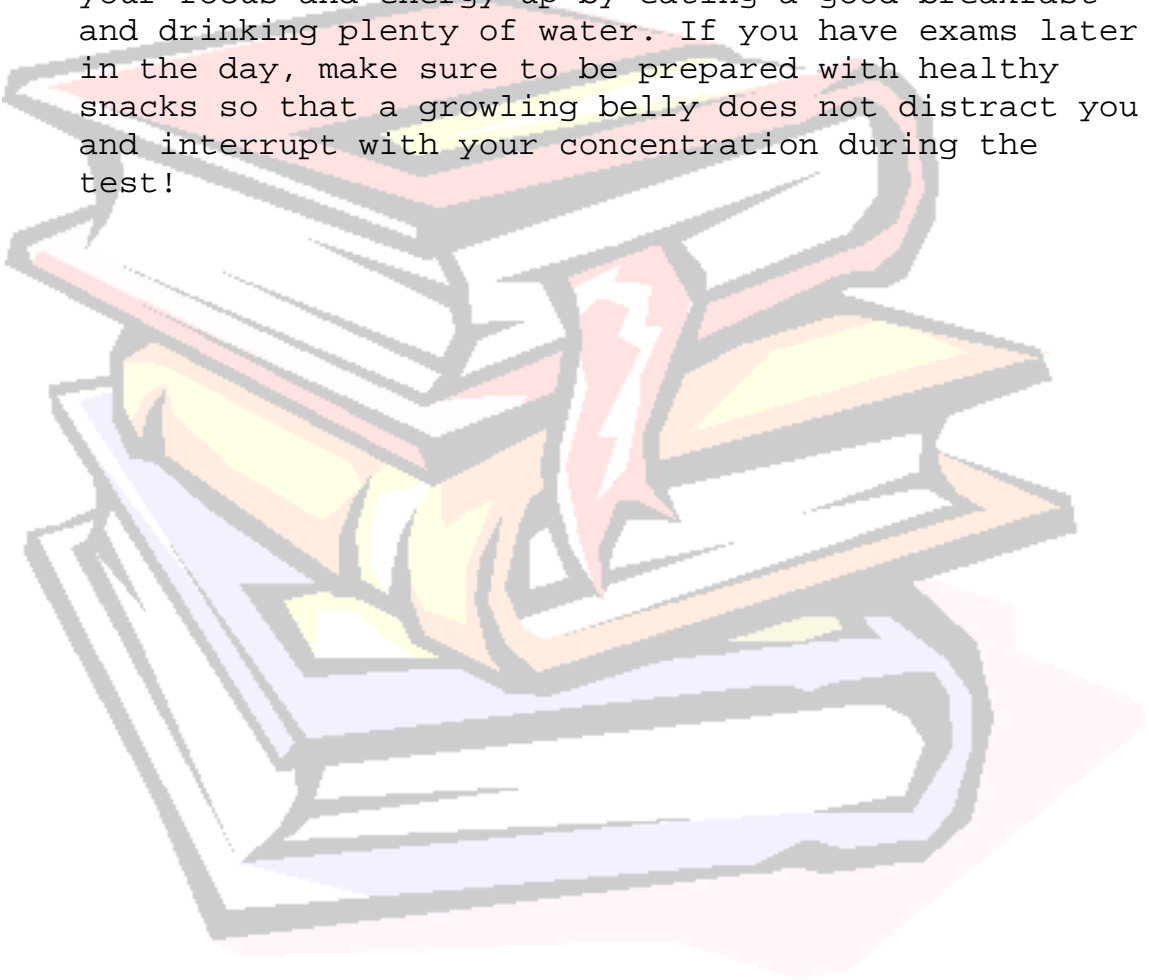
Did you know that making healthy food choices and taking care of your health can actually improve performance and concentration? Stress, lack of sleep, and being in a potential time crunch all work together to sabotage not only your test performance, but set up a domino effect that leads to poor nutrition. Compounding these factors can have negative effects on your final grade! If you think taking care of yourself is a waste of time that should be used for studying, think again!

Try these tips to help keep your body in top form to perform at its best on test day:

- ☑ Make time for exercise! Not only does exercise help to improve sleep patterns, just 20-30 minutes will reduce stress and allow you to go into your study session with more focus. It can be hard to overcome the inertia of a study break taken on the couch, but a quick exercise break will leave you energized.
- ☑ Go for balance! Make your carbohydrates complex and add some protein to your meals and snacks. This will keep your blood sugar levels stable and will decrease hunger and cravings- two things you don't need when you may already be emotionally spent and stressed!
- ☑ Eat at regular intervals. This will keep your energy level up and reduce the temptation to fill your body full of empty-calorie snacks. Empty calories fill you up on the calories, but lack nutrients your body needs. Also, they will usually leave you craving more in a very short time!
- ☑ Consider eating smaller meals/snacks more often (which further supports the last point). Also, large meals can sit in your stomach and may even slow you down mentally and physically. Ever eat a big meal, and then the only thing you want to do is crash on the couch? Exactly.
- ☑ Feeling fatigued - don't assume it is all related to the lack of sleep you have been getting. Dehydration

will make you feel fatigued and less focused. Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated, and don't overdo the caffeine to fight the fatigue. Try to keep caffeine and sugar to a minimum - these two can cause jitters and unstable blood sugar (and lead to an energy crash!). Drink water and create exercise time to help increase focus while you study - then make time to sleep!

- ☑ Prepare your brain *and* your body for exam day! Keep your focus and energy up by eating a good breakfast and drinking plenty of water. If you have exams later in the day, make sure to be prepared with healthy snacks so that a growling belly does not distract you and interrupt with your concentration during the test!



Brain Fuel

The following list of foods can work as a small meal or a snack. Plan out when you will eat so that you don't go longer than 4 hours or so without re-fueling. These suggestions will provide a healthy balance of carbohydrates and protein to keep your brain and body fueled and ready for test time!

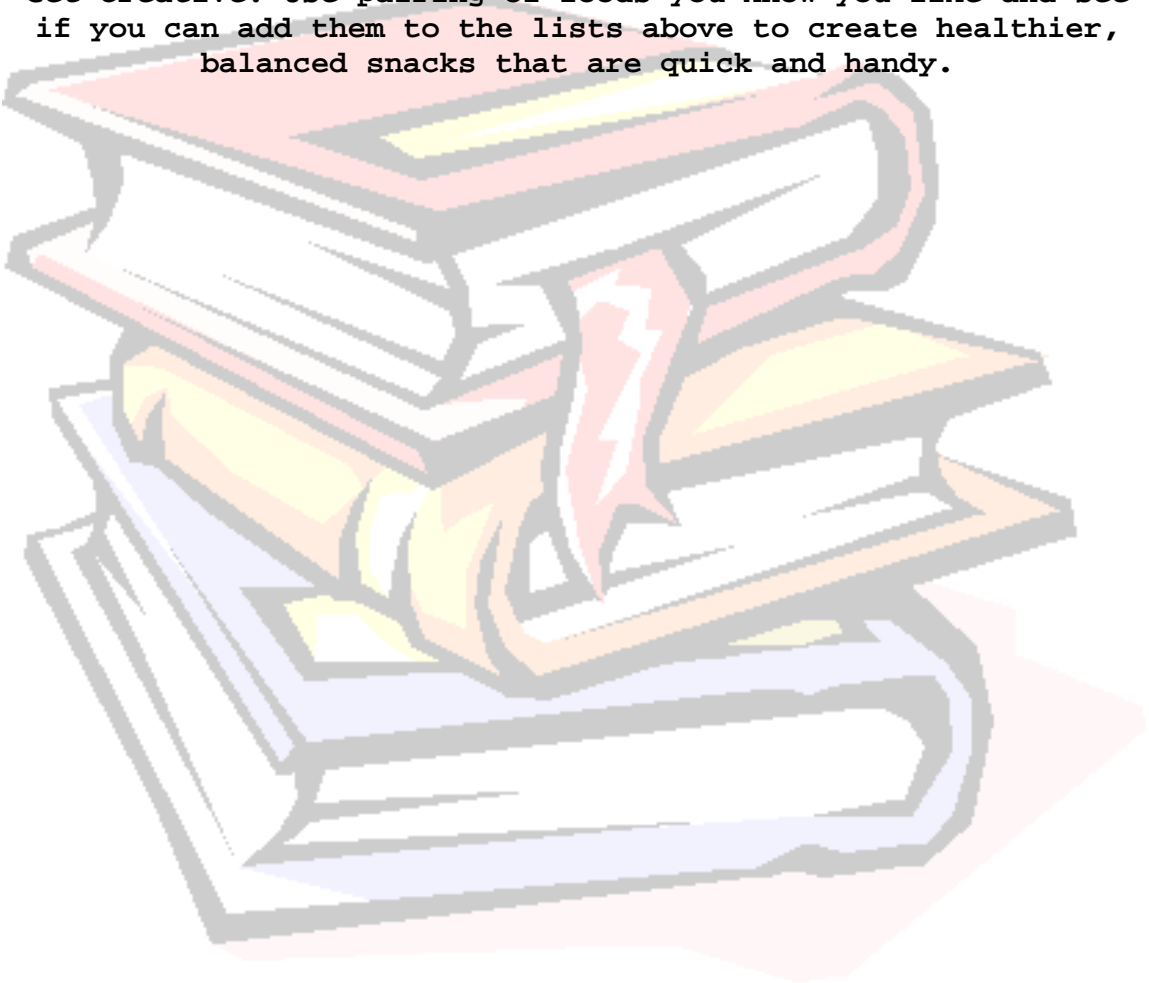
- o Whole wheat toast with peanut butter, hummus, light yogurt, or tuna
- o Baked potato with low-fat cheese and/or salsa
- o Banana and peanut butter
- o String cheese and a piece of fruit
- o Instant oatmeal with a little low-fat cottage cheese stirred in
- o Cereal with milk and fruit
- o Instant oatmeal with raisins and almonds
- o Sandwich made on whole wheat bread with deli meat and cheese
- o Vegetables soup and low-fat crackers
- o Tuna or chicken salad made with low-fat dressing or mayo
- o English muffin pizza made with pizza sauce and cheese
- o Microwave a sweet potato and top with cinnamon - a nutrient packed sweet!
- o Rice cakes with peanut butter and honey
- o Popcorn sprinkled with Italian seasoning and parmesan cheese
- o Cereal bar and a banana
- o Quesadilla made with low-fat cheese, salsa, black beans
- o Pita stuffed with lettuce, tomato, cucumber, a few nuts or chicken and low-fat dressing or hummus
- o Whole grain crackers and 2% cheese single and apple wedges
- o Dry cereal, dried fruit and nut mix
- o Cereal bar and low-fat milk

Don't be afraid to mix and match foods to create your own flavors. Choose one from each list to get variety from foods you may already have on hand:

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<u>Try:</u>	<u>With a dip or spread of:</u>	<u>Topped with:</u>
Toast	Peanut butter	Nuts
Low-fat crackers	Hummus	Diced veggies
Apples	Yogurt	Sunflower seeds
Bananas	Bean dip	Low-fat cheese
Pears	Yogurt	Black beans
Veggies	Spiced applesauce	Pita Pocket

Get creative! Use pairing of foods you know you like and see if you can add them to the lists above to create healthier, balanced snacks that are quick and handy.



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