

# BEAT THE 3PM munchies

If you can't get through the day without a snack attack, here's how to cope

**W**hen the clock strikes three, do you find yourself craving the naughty stuff – chocolate, chips, and more chocolate?

This is usually when our bodies have hit an energy slump. We've finished digesting lunch so our blood sugar levels drop, hence the cravings. Keeping energy levels replenished through the day is very important and easier than you think. Kristen Beck, director of Beck Health & Nutrition ([beckhealth.com.au](http://beckhealth.com.au)), says steering clear of the espresso machine and eating turbo-charged foods will leave you feeling great. So, avoid the junk food and get your energy boost the healthy way ...

Step away from the lolly jar, Jane!

TEXT BY ASHLEIGH LALOR. PHOTOGRAPHY BY YIANNI ASPRADAKIS. ACF SYNDICATION.

## Get some shuteye

"Research shows that people who don't get enough sleep are more likely to consume sugary and high-fat foods during the day," says Beck. When it comes to how much sleep you need, "The consensus appears to be around seven hours as a minimum," she says.

## Rise and shine

Even if you're running late to work, you must eat breakfast. "Great options are a wholegrain cereal or fruit and yoghurt," says Beck. "Eat as early as you can. The longer you leave it, the more likely you are to overeat [later]."

## Up your protein

"Protein makes you feel fuller for longer so you're less likely to overeat during the day," says Beck. "Fish, lean meats, legumes, eggs and low-fat dairy products will be your fuel."

## Choose low GI

Glycaemic index (GI) ranks carbohydrates on how they affect your blood glucose levels. Avoid high-GI foods (with a GI higher than 70) like sugary or processed foods. "Opt for low-GI foods [with a GI less than 55], such as sweet potato, kidney beans, basmati rice, wholegrain breads, low-fat dairy and some fruits," says Beck.

## Healthy snack ideas

**NUT-FREE** If you're allergic to nuts, try roasted chickpeas or broad beans by **Chic Nuts**, \$5.50 for 6 packets ([chicnuts.com](http://chicnuts.com)).  
**SLICED SNACKS** Who doesn't love having their fruit washed, sliced and packaged to pop in your handbag? Try **One Life Organic Sliced Apple**, from \$1.60 a pack ([onelifefood.com.au](http://onelifefood.com.au)). **BE NATURAL** Love muesli bars? You'll adore **Be Natural Four bars**, \$4.99 for pack of 6 ([benatural.com.au](http://benatural.com.au)). **SWEET TREAT** For sugar cravings, there's **Foxy's Premium Frozen Yoghurts**, \$9.95 ([foxyfoods.com.au](http://foxyfoods.com.au)). **WINTER WARMER** **La Zuppa soups**, \$3.79 ([lagina.com.au](http://lagina.com.au)) are free from artificial nasties.

## Plan your snacks

Preparing snacks the night before will keep you healthy and save money. You're more likely to choose wisely when you're not hungry, stopping mid-afternoon vending-machine raids. "Try fresh fruits and vegies, wholemeal toast or a small serving of wholegrain cereal," says Beck.

## Savour your supper

A big mistake many make when hungry is eating too quickly, which makes you more likely to overeat. "Your body doesn't have as much time to send messages to your brain to say you feel full, so slowing down your intake will be better for you in the long run," says Beck. "Dinner should take at least 15 minutes to eat."

## Sweeten up

"If you're craving sugar, then fruit, fruit and more fruit is the key," says Beck. "It's sweet, but high in fibre." Try natural yoghurts, but keep an eye on the sugar contents of some of the low-fat varieties. "Yoghurt contains protein and calcium, so it's the perfect snack to keep you away from the Tim Tams."

## Get moving

We hear it so often, but exercise is great for your body. "In addition to burning calories, exercise releases endorphins, which help to combat stress and therefore reduce cravings for sweet and fatty foods," says Beck. "You should aim to exercise three to four times a week, for a minimum of 30 minutes."

## Quench your thirst

"A lot of people mistake thirst for hunger. Making sure you're properly hydrated is an important part of maintaining a healthy body weight," says Beck. "Aim to drink eight glasses per day. You need more when it's hot and when you're exercising or drinking alcohol."

## Make a list

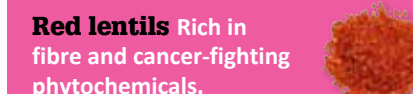
Create a weekly shopping list to stop you buying the bad stuff (if it's not in the pantry, you won't eat it!). Beck's top 10 ingredients include fresh fruit and vegies, fish, wholegrain breads, brown or basmati rice, eggs, wholegrain cereal or muesli, lean meat, natural low-fat yoghurt, legumes and the occasional treat.

## FATIGUE-FIGHTING FOODS

to add to your shopping list



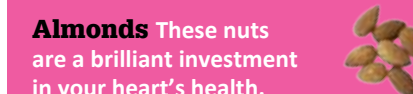
**Oats** They're low-GI and high in potassium, magnesium and calcium.



**Red lentils** Rich in fibre and cancer-fighting phytochemicals.



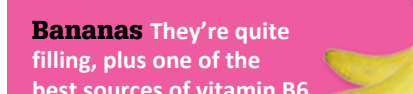
**Avocado** High in monounsaturated fats and a great energy source.



**Almonds** These nuts are a brilliant investment in your heart's health.



**Eggs** Full of omega-3s – the good fats – and a good dose of protein.



**Bananas** They're quite filling, plus one of the best sources of vitamin B6.



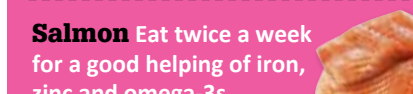
**Orange juice** Keep your fluid intake up and give yourself a dose of vitamin C.



**Wholemeal pitta** Low-GI, high-fibre and a gradual release of energy.



**Sunflower seeds** These are full of protein, iron, B vitamins and magnesium.



**Salmon** Eat twice a week for a good helping of iron, zinc and omega-3s.

## BEAT THOSE CRAVINGS – QUICK SMART!

Rev up your day by switching bad snacks for these energy-laden goodies



**9AM** Have a glass of skim milk instead of banana bread.



**11AM** Ditch your tea and biscuit for fruit with yoghurt.



**1PM** Add some boiled eggs to your healthy salad to fill you.



**3PM** Put down the choccy! Try corn thins and peanut butter.



**8PM** Eat soup before dinner instead of a dessert. **COSMO**