

Exam Time Eating

Balance carbs with protein. High carbohydrate snacks like pretzels, chips, bagels, cookies, and candy give you immediate energy, but when eaten by themselves can lead to an energy drop later on. Too many carbs cause lethargy, sleepiness and inability to concentrate. Not what you need during exam time! By adding some protein to the mix and slightly decreasing “carb” portions, you’ll be able to concentrate better. Try canned tuna with crackers, turkey sandwich, bean and cheese quesadilla, chicken fajita, string cheese and fruit, yogurt and fruit, eggs and toast, cottage cheese and fruit, protein smoothie, or pb and j sandwich.

Start every day with breakfast. Food is fuel. You’d never drive your car without gas, right? Why would you ask your body to run without fuel? Try whole wheat toast with pb, yogurt and fruit with almonds sprinkled in, instant oatmeal with milk, nuts, and sliced banana, or a handful of nuts and apple.

Eat small, frequent meals. This keeps energy levels steady.

Drink plenty of water. Even mild dehydration causes fatigue and can interfere with your thinking. Keep a glass or (reusable) water bottle by your side at all times.

Make yourself get up to snack. Avoid mindless eating by keeping snacks out of your study place.

Use non-food stress busters to cope with the tensions of exam time, instead of eating. Go for a bike ride, play a card game, do a crossword puzzle or jigsaw puzzle, surf the internet, listen to music.

Keep your room/apartment stocked with healthier snacks. Good ideas include: lowfat cheese, cottage cheese, and yogurt, instant oatmeal, whole grain, low sugar breakfast cereal (shredded wheat, Cheerios), nuts, “finger picking” fruits and vegetables: berries, grapes, cherries, cherry tomatoes, snap peas, edamame, baby carrots (use yogurt and salsa for dip).

Keep easy, healthy, convenient meal-type foods on hand. Keep “real meals” on hand that take only minutes to prepare. Examples: low fat frozen entrees, low sodium canned soups, rotisserie chicken, lean cold cut sandwiches- turkey, roast beef, chicken, or lean ham.

Avoid/limit sweets and sugary foods. If you MUST have them, enjoy them at the *end* of a meal. Avoid making a meal of *only* sweets.

Eat only when you are physically hungry, not because you are procrastinating or in need of a study break. True hunger signals include stomach growling, pangs/twinges. If you’re not hungry but still desire to eat, take a 10-15 minute time out and try to figure out what you really need (pep talk, study break, sleep, etc.)