

United States: Changes in Consumption of Snacks, 1977-78 and 2003-06

Item	Children, 2-18	Adults, 19-39	Adults, 40-59	Adults, 60 +
Number of snacks consumed per day				
1977-1978	1.26	1.38	1.34	0.93
2003-2006	2.23	2.22	2.35	2.05
Snack size (grams)				
1977-1978	210	235	212	154
2003-2006	335	374	354	236
Total energy from snacking (Kcal)				
1977-1978	357	403	334	278
2003-2006	579	679	573	404
Change, 1977-78 to 2003-06	+62.2%	+ 68.5%	+ 71.6%	+ 45.3%

Source: Piernas C. and B.M. Popkin (2010b) "Snacking Increased among U.S. Adults between 1977 and 2006." *The Journal of Nutrition* 140(2) 325-332.

Comment: The authors used national food expenditure surveys to trace the growth in consumption of snack foods in the United States over the last quarter century. They found that for children and for adults in three major age groups, the number of snacks per day, the average size of snacks, and the total energy consumed in snacks, all rose substantially. Snacks are contributing an increasing amount to total daily calorie intake. Snacks are being consumed both at home and away from home. Many snacks would be classified by nutritionists as "unhealthy" options. While fast foods and sweetened beverages (See page 5) have been blamed for rising obesity, the snacking habit has avoided scrutiny. Certainly, snacking has contributed to the increased daily caloric consumption at the same time that physical activity of both children and adults has been reduced.

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