

How to ... make dips healthier

April 3 2009, By Alison Johnson

Slathering vegetables and fruit in high-fat, high-sodium dips can ruin what would have been a healthy snack. Here are nutritionists' tips on choosing better toppings:

Check the ingredients. If a dip contains yogurt, sour cream, cheese or mayonnaise, those items should be nonfat or low-fat versions.

Embrace salsa. Salsa is made mostly with tomatoes, which are high in an antioxidant that may help fight [heart disease](#) and cancer. As for the spice, some people report eating less overall if a meal or snack includes fiery foods.

Buy beans. Dips heavy on beans are high in fiber and usually lower in fat than other options.

Make homemade

... hummus. This dip, made of chickpeas, is packed with fiber. But store-bought hummus also can be high in olive oil and tahini (sesame seed paste), both fats that are heart-healthy but calorie-heavy. Whip up your own batch by pureeing canned chickpeas with lemon juice, garlic, cayenne pepper and a little olive oil and tahini. If the paste is too thick, thin it with water instead of oil.

... guacamole. Avocados are again healthy but high in calories, so watch the other ingredients in guacamole. Blend one avocado with a cup of nonfat yogurt and a cup of nonfat cottage cheese, then season to taste

with cayenne pepper and ground cumin. You also can add chopped onion and cilantro.

... and spinach dip. Thaw some chopped frozen spinach _ one of the most nutritious veggies around _ and blend it with nonfat yogurt and cottage cheese (not mayonnaise), scallions and curry powder if you like.

Don't drown your food. See if a dab of dip makes your snack taste good before you dunk the whole thing.

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