

Making sure your movie snack isn't a box office bust

May 1 2023, by Aaron Nieto



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Snacking at the movie theater is a ritual as old as cinema itself. And with the growing number of options, some may need help navigating the nutritional values of each offering. An expert at Baylor College of Medicine has some tips on how to stay healthy and "never be hungry

again" at the theater.

"The experience of going to the movies and focusing on what you're watching rather than what you're eating can create this sort of mindless binging of unhealthy snacks," said Courtney Ford, senior registered dietitian in the Department of Medicine—Gastroenterology and Hepatology at Baylor. "One of the best things you can do is be intentional with what you order so you don't eat more than you actually want to."

On the healthy side

The healthiest item most often available to people at the theater is popcorn. The snack is a [whole grain](#) that doesn't dramatically affect [blood sugar](#) like other movie snacks. However, toppings such as heavy salt and butter, which is high in saturated fat, can remove the nutritional value.

Chocolate covered nuts are also a common item that contain protein, are heart healthy and have less sugar than chocolate covered fruit. For theaters where there are more substantial food offerings, Ford says to look for items that offer a carb and a protein, such as hot dogs, grilled chicken sandwiches and wraps. Items high in protein will keep you full longer as opposed to other, less substantial foods.

Less healthy

On the other side of the spectrum, [sugary snacks](#) at the concession stand pose the biggest threat to one's health.

"Snacks that are pure sugar, like gummy or sour candies, raise your blood sugar really high and if that's the only thing you eat, your blood

sugar then dramatically drops," said Ford. "If you are going to have candy at the movies, be sure you eat a carb or protein to mitigate those drastic changes in blood sugar levels."

Ford says that [sugary drinks](#) like frozen [carbonated beverages](#) and sodas are empty calories and have the same effects as candy.

A healthy home theater

Theaters aren't the only place where people can watch blockbusters together. Whether you attend a community movie night or have one at home, Ford has healthy alternatives to common movie snacks. Frozen grapes and [fresh fruit](#) are good alternatives to candy. Popcorn can stay on the menu. Sandwiches are also a very balanced dish that Ford recommends bringing along if possible.

Above all, Ford reminds movie goers that part of eating healthy doesn't mean completely avoiding the foods you enjoy.

"You aren't going to the movies every day, so don't feel bad if you decide to snack extra," said Ford. "The more you put off these cravings, the more likely you'll overdo it when you finally let yourself enjoy them."

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

Citation: Making sure your movie snack isn't a box office bust (2023, May 1) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-05-movie-snack-isnt-office.html>

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