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HEALTH

Dream machine

What would nutritionists love to see in office vending machines?

By Danielle Braff, Special to Tribune Newspapers

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In an office building, vending machines are typically stocked with goodies to appeal to every sweet tooth, salt craving and "get me out of this slump" snacker. But in an ideal world, the vending machine would be able to satisfy your craving and also be good for your body.

We asked nutritionists which foods they would stock in their dream vending machines. Below are the goods, dealt by registered dietitians Lisa Young, author of "The Portion Teller Plan: The No-Diet Reality Guide to Eating, Cheating and Losing Weight Permanently," Jackie Newgent, author of the "Big Green Cookbook," and Elizabeth Somer, author of nearly a dozen books including "Eat Your Way to Happiness."

Try throwing some of these in your desk drawer. You won't even need exact change.

1. In-shell California pistachios

Aka the skinny nut, these are one of the lowest-calorie nuts, with only 3 calories per nut. They offer polyphenol antioxidants and provide more lutein and zeaxanthin than any other nuts. Plus, recent research shows that people snacking on in-shell pistachios ate 41 percent fewer calories than those who consumed shelled nuts. — Newgent

2. Dried figs

They're known for their excellent fiber content — one-quarter cup provides 5 grams of fiber. They also contain more calcium, potassium and iron than many other fruits. They're perfect for a sweet craving. — Newgent

3. Whole wheat pretzels

Get your fiber and whole grains fill with an ounce of this crunchy snack. — Young

4. Dark chocolate bar

Dark chocolate provides flavonoids, which have cardiovascular benefits. Stick to a 100-calorie bar. — Newgent

5. Kind Fruit & Nut Bar

The only ingredients are nuts, seeds and dried fruit, which will give your body the fiber, energy and fullness you'll need to get through the day. — Somer

6. Orange juice

Reach for this instead of a soda, and you'll get a vending machine beverage rich in vitamin C, potassium, folate and an orchestra of phytonutrients, which lower your risk of [heart disease](#) and some [cancers](#). — Somer

7. Walnuts

They're rich in omega-3s, and they make you feel full very quickly. Stick to a serving of 1 ounce, which will give you about 200 calories. — Young

8. Baked potato chips

It's an easy switch from fried to baked, and they taste nearly as good. The baked version has about 1.5 grams of fat and 110 calories per 1-ounce bag compared with the fried bag, which has about 10 grams of fat and 150 calories for the same serving size. — Young

9. Whole grain crackers

Whole grains are associated with a reduced risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer, [diabetes](#) and [obesity](#). They will satisfy your need for a crunchy snack while boosting your whole grain and fiber intake. — Newgent

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