

100-Calorie Snack Packs: Do They Help With Weight Loss?

By CHRISTI MYERS May 31, 2006

These days, quite a few snack foods are available in 100-calorie packs -- like Pringles chips, Nutter Butter cookies, and even the 8-ounce mini Coke serving size.

These portion-controlled servings may be convenient, but they typically cost more per ounce than larger serving packages.

Are 100-calorie bags worth the cost?

"We are a nation on the go, looking for convenience and used the right way, there is nothing wrong with them," said dietitian Julie Walsh. "Used the wrong way and you are going to pile on a lot of additional calories that don't add a lot of nutrients to the diet."

I recently bought snacks in all sizes and flavors -- chips, cookies, pretzels and soft drinks. The first thing I noticed was that there wasn't much in each serving.

"One of the downsides is that the serving size for 100 calories isn't a lot," Walsh said. "Now that may not fill up ... too many people."

You're going to pay more for the packaging, too. With a full bag of pretzels, the cost is about 17 cents an ounce. Divided into 100-calorie packs, the same pretzels cost nearly 40 cents an ounce, more than double.

According to Walsh, "Whenever you pay for convenience, there's going to be a higher price."

What else can you eat that is 100 calories? A container of yogurt or an apple flavored with a tablespoon of peanut butter, which is a much healthier snack, Walsh said.

"The problem with some of the snack chips is that there is not, not much nutrition, not much fiber," Walsh said. "So you're not getting anything that's going to fill you up."

Many of the 100-calorie pack items are free of trans fats and low in sugar, but don't confuse them with a nutritious snack, experts say. That's because they're highly processed, and not nearly as good for you as fresh fruits and vegetables.