

Snacks Can Be Part of a Healthy Diet

Healthy snacks can be an important part of the diet for growing children. Children have smaller stomachs than adults and the time between structured meals is often too long for them. Their rate of growth is fast and their nutrient needs are high. Snacks can supply part of the food and nutrition children need for energy, and are a great way to encourage them to eat more fruits and vegetables.



Food Safety

When packing snacks for school, think about the length of time the snack will sit before it will be eaten. Send perishable foods with a cold pack or partially freeze them so they will keep cool before being eaten. Many snacks included on the list are safe without any refrigeration.

Snacking Tips

- Snacks should complement meals instead of replacing them. Offer snacks at least 1 ½ hours before a meal so children will be hungry for the meal.
- Pre-planning makes snacking easier. Plan your grocery list with healthy snacks in mind so you have a variety of healthy snack foods on hand at home.
- Make healthy snacking easy. Put healthy snack foods on lower shelves and on the kitchen counter so children can get to them easily.
- To increase nutritional value, plan to have foods from two different groups in your snack. For example, cheese and crackers, 100% juice and sunflower seeds, milk and cereal, etc.
- Purchase single serve portions and avoid eating snacks “out of the bag.” If you have a large bag, take out a serving and put it into a smaller bag or other container.
- Be a good role model and practice healthy snacking as a family.

- Children eat fruits and vegetables better if they are cut into bite sized pieces. To keep cut fruit from turning brown, dip the pieces in an acid containing fruit juice such as pineapple juice or orange juice. Commercial anti-browning agents are also available in grocery stores.
- Milk, 100% juices, soy beverages and water are good choices for drinks. Carbonated soft drinks contain large amounts of sugar which are empty calories and may promote tooth decay.

Celebrations



While food is part of celebrations world-wide, other activities can contribute to the festivities and make children feel special. For example, check with your child’s teacher to see if the classroom has a “wish list” that you can contribute to instead of providing a food treat. Purchasing a book, reading it to the class and then donating it to the classroom library is another great way to celebrate a birthday. If you do choose to have a food treat, pick something small and age appropriate. Fruits come in wonderful bright colors and are appreciated by children for their eye appeal and sweet taste.

Suggestions for Healthy Snacks



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Breads and Cereals

- Choose whole grains as much as possible
- Whole Grain Crackers
- Low Fat Granola and Trail Mixes
- Low Fat or Whole Grain Muffins
- Pretzels
- Animal Crackers
- Graham Crackers
- Dry Cereals
- Cereal or Granola Bars
- Popcorn
- Bagels
- Saltine Crackers
- Oyster Crackers
- English Muffins
- Energy or Protein Bars
- Baked Fish-Shaped Crackers
- Vanilla Wafers



Fruits and Vegetables

- Whole or Cut Fresh Fruits
- Fresh Vegetable Sticks
- Raisins or Other Dried Fruits
- Canned Fruits
- Fresh Veggies with Salsa or Low Fat Dip

Beverages

- Milk, Low Fat, Flavored or Plain
- Soy Beverages
- Fruit and Vegetable Juices-100 % Juice
- Fruit Smoothies
- Yogurt Smoothies

Other Foods

- Cheese Slices or Sticks
- Yogurt Cups
- Hard Cooked Eggs
- Tree Nuts or Soy Nuts
- Sunflower Seeds
- Peanuts
- Peanut Butter and Crackers
- ½ Peanut Butter Sandwich

Healthy Snack Choices



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