

Snacks for School Age Children

(Nutritious, Delicious, Healthy & Fun)

Snacking is a healthy part of a child's life. Children have high energy and nutrient needs relative to their size, so they need more food energy than they can consume with three regular meals. Nutritious snacks play an important role in providing children with the energy and essential nutrients they need for healthy growth and development. Encouraging your children to combine healthy eating with regular physical activity will help to prepare them for a healthy adulthood.

Deciding what types of snacks to serve your children is important when planning your child's overall diet.

Snacks should include a variety of foods from the four food groups illustrated in Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. Here are some yummy snack ideas:

- 1. Grain Products:** These grainy snacks will improve children's energy levels while providing B vitamins, iron and fibre.
 - rice cakes & crackers
 - bagels
 - bran or whole wheat muffins
 - breads of all kinds such as multi-grain or rye
 - dry, unsweetened cereal (with or without milk)
- 2. Vegetables & Fruit:** These delicious snacks are a rich source of vitamins A & C, folate, and fibre.
 - fresh or canned fruit
 - carrot sticks
 - green & red pepper strips
 - broccoli & cauliflower florets
 - vegetable or unsweetened fruit juice
- 3. Milk Products:** These tasty snacks provide children with protein, vitamins A & D and calcium.
 - yogurt
 - pudding made with milk
 - white or chocolate milk
 - cheese
 - fruit smoothies made with yogurt, fruit and milk
- 4. Meat & Alternatives:** These yummy snacks provide a great source of protein, B vitamins, iron and zinc.
 - nuts* & seeds
 - hard boiled eggs
 - spreads like peanut butter*, hummus, tuna or salmon salad
 - sliced meats such as chicken, turkey, ham or roast beef



*** Always check with your children's school before sending any nuts or nut products to school, as there may be restrictions on their use.**

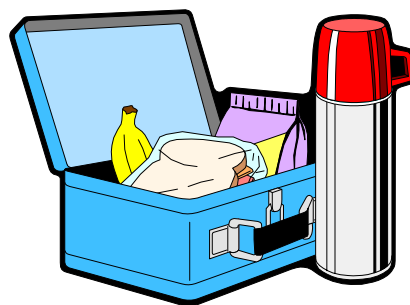
Involve your children in choosing their snacks. Develop a list of healthy snack choices and allow your children to select the snacks to be purchased. This way, children are more likely to enjoy their snacks and can play a part in choosing them even if they don't accompany you to the grocery store.

It is also helpful to make healthy snack choices available at home. If your cupboards are filled with cookies and chips, it's easy for children to make them the snack of choice. Try to prepare healthy snacks in advance whenever possible. If fresh fruit are washed and vegetables are cleaned and cut up, your children will be more likely to choose them when hunger strikes. Encourage your children to drink water to satisfy their thirst. Fluids such as milk, juice and soup are good snack ideas and also provide the body with water.

Foods can be thought of as "everyday foods" or "sometimes foods". Avoid labelling foods as "good" or "bad". All snack foods, including chips and chocolate bars, can be enjoyed occasionally. No food should be eliminated as a snack choice just because of the calorie, fat or sugar content. The key to healthy snacking is providing a balance of food choices that your children can enjoy.

Parents may want to consider their children's teeth when planning snacks. Foods that are sweet and sticky contribute to tooth decay/cavities. Hard and crisp foods, cheese, & sugar free gum help to clean the teeth after snacking by increasing saliva flow. However, children should be encouraged to rinse their mouth with water when possible

Remember that snacking isn't just for kids! As a parent, if you make healthy snack choices, your children are more likely to make healthy snack choices now and in the future.



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