

Healthy Snacking at Home and School

Nutritious, Delicious, Healthy and 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 *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*. Here are some yummy snack ideas:

Vegetables & Fruit: These delicious foods are important sources of vitamins A & C, folate and fibre. We are encouraged to eat at least one dark green and one orange vegetable everyday.

- fruit including cantaloupe, apricots and mango
- carrot and sweet potato sticks
- green and red pepper strips
- broccoli florets and snow peas

Grain Products: These help improve children's energy levels while providing B vitamins, iron and fibre. Whole grain choices are recommended.

- breads of all kinds
- bagels
- muffins
- rice cakes and crackers
- dry, unsweetened cereal (with or without milk)

Milk and Alternatives: These tasty snacks provide children with protein, vitamins A & D and calcium. Lower fat milk choices are recommended.

- white or chocolate milk (skim, 1% or 2% milk fat)
- yogourt (3.25% or less milk fat)
- cheese (preferably 20% or less milk fat)
- fruit smoothies made with yogourt, fruit and milk

Meat & Alternatives: These yummy snacks provide a great source of protein, B vitamins, iron and zinc.

- hard boiled eggs
- nuts* and seeds
- sliced meats such as chicken, turkey or roast beef
- spreads like hummus, tuna, salmon salad or peanut butter*



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

More Healthy Snacking Tips:

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 because they are helping to choose them, even if they don't accompany you to the grocery store.

Make healthy snacks the easy choice at home. Have healthy snacks available when hunger strikes and when packing food for school or other activities. When buying packaged food, compare food labels to find the healthiest option. Prepare snacks in advance. Wash vegetables and fruit. If cut, store cut vegetables and fruit in the refrigerator. Try saving money by putting food into "grab and go" snack size portions yourself.

Drinking enough fluid is important to children's health. Encourage your children to drink water to satisfy their thirst. Milk provides important nutrients. Everyone is encouraged to drink 2 servings of 250 ml (8 oz) of milk each day. Children should be encouraged to eat whole fruits to meet their recommended daily fruit intake. If offered, juice should be 100% and unsweetened. It should also be limited to 125 ml to 180 ml (4 to 6 oz) in a day for children 1 to 6 years old and 250 ml to 375 ml (8 to 12 oz) in a day for children 7 to 18 years old.

It is wise to consider children's teeth when planning snacks. Foods that are sweet and sticky may contribute to tooth decay/cavities. Hard and crisp foods, cheese and 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.

Think of foods as "everyday foods" or "sometimes foods". Limiting foods and beverages high in calories, fat, sugar and salt is an important step towards better health. Avoid labelling foods as "good" or "bad". The key to healthy snacking is providing a variety and a balance of healthy food choices that your children can enjoy.

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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