

# Healthy Snacks



## Snack Attack

- As part of a healthy diet, kids should eat 3 main meals and 2 to 3 healthy snacks a day.
- Because snacks play a major role in kids' diets, contributing up to 1/3 to 1/2 of a child's daily food intake, be sure to offer healthy snacks to kids.

## Did You Know?

**Almost all of the snacks served to kids should be fruits and veggies!**

Most kids aren't eating enough fruits and veggies! Serving fruits and veggies for snacks is a great way to help kids get the vitamins and minerals they need for growth and brain power.

**Fruits and Veggies:  
How much do kids need?**

GIRLS		
Age	Fruit (cups/day)	Veggies (cups/day)
4 – 8	1	1.5
9 – 13	1.5	2
14 – 18	1.5	2.5

BOYS		
Age	Fruit (cups/day)	Veggies (cups/day)
4 – 8	1	1.5
9 – 13	1.5	2
14 – 18	1.5	2.5

Source: [www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov)

## Healthy Beverages

**Drink Milk with Meals and Water with Snacks!**

### 1st Choice: Water

Water should be the main drink served to kids at snack times. Water satisfies thirst without adding calories or sugar and keeps kids hydrated. Calorie-free flavored waters, seltzers, plain sparkling water, and club soda are healthy options. They do not contain the sugars, calories, or caffeine of sodas. Serve them alone or try making "healthy sodas" by mixing them with equal amounts of 100% fruit juice.

## Did You Know?

**Kids who drink more sugar-sweetened drinks such as sodas, fruit drinks, sport drinks, and teas consume more calories and are more likely to be overweight than kids who drink fewer sugary drinks.**

### 2nd Choice: Milk (non-fat or low-fat)

Milk is a terrific source of calcium and vitamin D. However, if kids are drinking 2% or whole milk, it is also the #1 source of saturated fat in kids' diets. Soy and rice "milks" (fortified with calcium and vitamin D) are also healthy options.

### 3rd Choice: 100% Fruit Juice

Choose only 100% fruit juice and drink only small amounts each day. Better yet, eat whole fruit!

7 – 18 yr olds	drink no more than 1.5 cups (12 oz) a day
1 – 6 yr olds	drink no more than 3/4 cup (6 oz) a day

Fruit juice is rich in vitamins, minerals, and cancer-fighting compounds; however, it is high in calories – even if it's 100% juice. Orange juice is one of the most nutritious juices, followed by (in order of nutritional content) grapefruit, prune, pineapple, grape, and apple.

Many beverages like Capri Sun, V8-Splash, Tropicana Twisters, Sunny Delight, Kool Aid Jammers, Hi-C, or juice drinks from Very Fine, Welch's or Snapple are easily mistaken for juice. These beverages are more like soda than juice. They are merely sugar water with a few tablespoons of added juice.

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## Protein Foods

For a snack with staying power, include a protein.

- **Milk (non-fat or low-fat).** Join the “White Milk Club.”
- **Yogurt (non-fat or low-fat).** Try plain and add fresh or frozen (unsweetened) fruit, low-fat granola, or whole grain cereal.
- **Cheese.** Serve lower-fat cheeses in small portions; serve with other foods like fruit, vegetables, or whole grain crackers.
- **Cottage Cheese (low-fat)**
- **100% Nut Butter.** Try natural peanut, almond, or cashew butter.
- **Nuts and Seeds.** Nuts and seeds in general are very nutritious and a good source of protein but are high in fat and calories. Thus, serve small portions (a small handful) and serve along with another snack, such as fruit. Look for nuts that are unsalted and unsweetened. Try almonds (one of the most nutritious), peanuts, pecans, pistachios, walnuts, cashews, pumpkin seeds, and sunflower seeds.
- **Trail Mix.** Trail mixes are easy to make. Try your favorite combo of low-fat granola, whole grain cereals, nuts, pretzels, and dried fruits like raisins, apricots, apples, mangos, or cranberries. Trail mix is also high in calories so it’s best to serve small portions.
- **Poultry, Meat, Seafood, Tofu.** Choose lower-fat, reduced-sodium brands of skinless turkey, skinless chicken, roast beef, and pork. Choose tuna packed in water. Tofu is also a good protein source. Serve with veggies and whole grain foods such as bread, pita, crackers, or tortillas (as a wrap sandwich). Cut sandwiches in half to make snack-sized portions.
- **Eggs.** Hardboiled eggs make great snacks!

## Fruit – Eat a Rainbow!

Almost all snacks served to kids should be fruits and vegetables!

*Kids should eat 1 to 1.5 cups of fruit every day!*

- **Fresh or Frozen Fruit.** Eat a rainbow of anything in season: strawberries, blueberries, watermelons, kiwis, cantaloupe, apples, oranges, mangos, papayas. Cut into small chunks, make kabobs, or eat whole.
- **Fruit Cups, Canned Fruit, Applesauce (unsweetened)**
- **Dried Fruit (no added sugar).** Apricots, cranberries, raisins, apples, cherries, bananas, mangos, papayas.
- **Fruit Leather, Fruit Snacks (100% fruit).** Many brands of fruit leathers and fruit snacks are more like candy than fruit. They should be avoided because they are very high in sugar, low in fruit, low in fiber, and stick to teeth, which causes tooth decay.
- **Fruit Smoothie.** Blend fruit with 100% fruit juice and low-fat yogurt. Many store-made smoothies have added sugars and are not the healthiest choices.

*Serving Suggestions:* Try serving fruit with low-fat yogurt, 1% cottage cheese, or fat-free whipped topping. Some fruits, like apples, are great with natural peanut butter.

For a “stick-to-your-ribs” snack with staying power, serve a protein snack along with a fruit or vegetable.

## Vegetables – Eat a Rainbow!

Almost all snacks served to kids should be fruits and vegetables!

*Kids should eat 1.5 to 2.5 cups of vegetables every day!*

- **Fresh (raw or steamed).** Eat a rainbow of anything in season: broccoli, bell peppers (red, green, yellow, orange), cauliflower, carrots, celery, tomatoes, snap peas, snow peas, green beans, zucchini. Cut into small chunks, make kabobs, or eat whole.
- **Frozen or Canned (low sodium)**
- **Salad.** Make a salad from the darker green lettuces and spinach and add a variety of other veggies. Set out veggies like a salad bar and let kids build their own.
- **Edamame (pronounced “eh-dah-MAH-may”).** Edamame are soybeans that are fun to eat, easy to serve and great for you! Can be found fresh and frozen.

*Serving Suggestions:* Try serving veggies with hummus (many great flavors), bean dip, salsa, guacamole, 100% nut butter, 1% cottage cheese or low-fat or fat-free salad dressing (e.g. fat-free Ranch or Thousand Island).

# Healthy Snacks

## Breads, Crackers & Cereals

### Go for the Whole Grain!

Though most kids eat plenty of grain products, too many of those grains are cookies, cakes, sugary cereals, and other refined grains that are high in sugars and fat. Try to serve mostly whole grains, which provide more fiber, vitamins, and minerals than refined grains. If the first item on the ingredient list doesn't say whole grain, it's not truly a whole grain food.

- **English Muffins, Pita Bread, Tortillas.** Try stuffing or topping with veggies, 100% nut butter, low-fat cheese, 1% cottage cheese, lean deli meat, or water-packed tuna. Also try dipping them in hummus, salsa, guacamole, or bean dip.
- **Breakfast Cereals.** Whole grains, fortified, high fiber, low sugar, low-fat cereals are great either dry or with low-fat milk. Look for cereals with at least 3 to 5 grams of fiber and no more than 35% added sugars by weight (approx 8 grams of sugar per serving).
- **Crackers.** Choose whole grain crackers with less than 1 gram of saturated fat and zero trans fats per serving.
- **Bagels.** Choose whole grain bagels and watch serving sizes! Try mini bagels and top with 100% nut butters, fruit spreads, turkey slices, veggies, or a slice of low-fat cheese.
- **Rice Cakes.** Choose brown rice. Top with low-fat cheese, 100% nut butter, or lean deli meats.
- **Popcorn.** Air popped is best! Otherwise, try low-fat microwave popcorn. Forgo the butter! Spray with vegetable or olive oil and add parmesan cheese, garlic powder, or other non-salt seasonings.
- **Baked Tortilla Chips.** Choose low-fat, low sodium varieties - great with salsa, bean dip, or low-fat melted cheese.
- **Granola and Cereal Bars.** Choose whole grain, low-fat, low sugar bars.
- **Pretzels, Breadsticks, and Flatbreads.** These low-fat items should not be everyday offerings. Most are made from refined grains, not whole grains. Several are also high in salt. So only offer these as snacks now and then.



**Make it easy for kids to choose healthy snacks – keep fruits and veggies on hand and ready to eat. Don't stock your shelves with cookies, chips, and candy.**

# Healthy Snacks

## Yummy Snack Ideas!

- **Fruit kabobs** with cantaloupe, strawberries, grapes, and watermelon chunks (see recipe for low-fat yogurt dip)
- **Fruit and low-fat cheese kabobs**
- **Quesadillas** with whole wheat tortillas, low-fat cheese, salsa, and vegetables
- **Whole grain crackers** topped with low-fat cheese
- **Cucumber slices** topped with a dollop of low-fat cottage cheese and a dried cranberry
- **Sliced turkey** wrapped around slices of fresh cucumber, bell peppers, carrots
- **Low-fat granola bar** with non-fat or low-fat milk
- **Frozen bananas** topped with 'natural' peanut butter (no added sugars or fats)
- **Sliced vegetables** served with a low-fat dip such as hummus, bean dip, salsa, guacamole, or salad dressing (tons of great flavors to choose from!)
- **Ants on a Log** – spread peanut butter on celery and add raisins
- **Whole wheat pita** stuffed with tuna (water packed), lettuce leaves and celery chunks
- **Fruit parfait** with layers of low-fat yogurt, fresh fruit chunks, and low-fat granola



## Occasional Sweet Treats

When sweets are offered for those occasional treats, serve healthier versions that are lower in sugar, fat, and calories. Avoid rich bakery foods such as donuts, sweet rolls, cakes, cookies, and muffins that are super high in sugar and fat and have poor nutritional quality.

- **Frozen Fruit Bars or Popsicles (100% fruit juice, no added sugars)**
- **Angel Food Cake.** Top with fresh fruit and a dollop of low-fat whipped topping or yogurt.
- **Fig Newtons.** Look for fruit bars with no added sugars.
- **Cookies.** Animal crackers, Graham crackers, Gingersnaps, Vanilla Wafers.
- **Frozen Yogurt and Pudding.** Even low-fat varieties are high in added sugars so should be served only as occasional treats.

## Snack Recipes

### Fruit and Yogurt Smoothie

Put all ingredients into a blender and blend until smooth.

- ½ cup non-fat plain or vanilla yogurt
- ¼ cup 100% orange juice or non-fat milk
- 1 small banana
- ¼ cup blueberries
- ¼ cup fresh mango
- Ice if desired

### Easy Low-Fat Fruit Dip

- ½ cup low-fat or non-fat vanilla yogurt
- 1 tsp honey
- ¼ tsp cinnamon
- ¼ tsp nutmeg

Mix ingredients together in a bowl until well blended. Serve with your favorite fruits!

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# 20 Tips for Healthier Snacking

Kids  
Can Do  
it!



When kids get hungry between meals, be prepared to offer quick and healthy snacks. Snacking is a major pastime for many kids - and it isn't necessarily bad. Snacking can help kids curb hunger throughout the day, as well as provide energy and nutrients. But the quality of your children's snacks is key. Consider these tips for healthier snacking. Because snacks play a major role in kids' diets, contributing up to  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a child's daily food intake, be sure to offer HEALTHY snacks.

- 1. Give kids a say.** Let kids choose snacks from a couple of comparable choices, such as regular or frozen low-fat yogurt, celery or carrots, whole-grain toast or whole-grain crackers, apples or oranges. Better yet, recruit your kid's help at the grocery store when you're selecting snacks or in the kitchen when you're assembling snacks.
- 2. Designate a snacking zone.** Restrict snacking to the kitchen. You'll save your kids countless calories from mindless munching in front of the TV.
- 3. Make it quick.** If your kids need to snack on the go, think beyond a bag of potato chips. Offer string cheese, low-fat yogurt, low-fat cereal bars, or other drip-free items.
- 4. Don't be fooled by labeling gimmicks.** Foods marketed as low-fat or fat-free can still be high in calories. Likewise, foods touted as cholesterol-free can still be high in fat, saturated fat, and sugar. Check nutrition labels to find out the whole story.
- 5. Go for the grain.** Whole-grain snacks — such as whole-grain pretzels or tortillas and low-sugar, whole-grain cereals — can give your children energy with some staying power.
- 6. Out of sight, out of mind.** If the cookie jar is full, your kids will probably clamor for cookies. But if there aren't any cookies in the house, fresh fruit or raw veggies may seem more appealing.
- 7. Play with your food.** Ask your kids to make towers out of whole-grain crackers, spell words with pretzel sticks, or make funny faces on a plate using different types of fruit. Use a tablespoon of peanut butter as glue.
- 8. Think outside the box.** Offer something new, such as fresh pineapple, cranberries, red or yellow peppers, or roasted soy nuts. Slice a whole-wheat pita and serve with hummus.
- 9. Mix and match.** Serve baby carrots or other raw veggies with fat-free ranch dressing. Dip graham cracker sticks or fresh fruit in fat-free yogurt. Top celery, apples or bananas with peanut butter.
- 10. Revisit breakfast.** Many breakfast foods — such as low-sugar, whole-grain cereals and whole-grain toast — make great afternoon snacks.

**Restrict snacking to the kitchen. You'll save your kids countless calories from mindless munching in front of the TV.**

## 20 Tips for Healthier Snacking (cont'd)

11. **Use the freezer.** Mix mashed bananas and peanut butter, spread between graham crackers and freeze. For a new twist on old snack-time favorites, freeze grapes or peeled bananas, or fill an ice cube tray with 100% fruit juice.
12. **Have fun.** Use a cookie cutter to make shapes out of low-fat cheese slices, whole-grain bread or whole-grain tortillas. Eat diced fruit with chopsticks. Give snacks funny names. Try the classic “ants on a log” (celery topped with peanut butter and raisins) or make up your own.
13. **Sweeten it up.** Healthy snacks don't need to be bland. To satisfy a sweet tooth, offer fat-free pudding, frozen yogurt or frozen fruit bars.
14. **Pull out the blender.** Use skim milk, fat-free yogurt and fresh fruit to make your own smoothies.
15. **Promote independence.** Make it easy for older kids to help themselves. Keep a selection of ready-to-eat veggies in the refrigerator. Leave fresh fruit in a bowl on the counter. Store low-sugar, whole-grain cereal in an easily accessible cabinet, and stock fruit canned or packaged in its own juice in your pantry.
16. **Remember your leftovers.** A small serving of last night's casserole can make a great snack.
17. **Drinks count, too.** Offer your children plenty of water between meals. Jazz things up with shaped ice cubes, a crazy straw, or a squirt of lemon, cranberry or other fruit juice.
18. **Keep it safe.** Make sure your kid's snacks are age appropriate. Never give foods that pose a choking hazard — such as nuts, raisins, whole grapes or popcorn — to kids younger than age 4.
19. **Practice what you preach.** Let your kids catch you munching raw vegetables or snacking on a bowl of grapes.
20. **Be patient.** Your kid's snacking habits may not change overnight. Look for positive changes over weeks or months.



Teaching your kids to make healthy snack choices now will set the stage for a lifetime of healthy snacking!  
**Start Today!**

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