

Healthy Kids' Snacks

Snacks are a bigger part of kids' diets than in the past. Snacks can make positive or negative contributions to kids' diets ...depending on the choices we offer. Next time your children say, "I'm hungry," or if you need to get them through to the next meal, reach for one of these healthy snacks



Vegetables

Most of the snacks served to children should be fruits and vegetables, since most kids do not eat the recommended five to thirteen servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Popular vegetables that can be served raw with dip or salad dressing include:

- Broccoli
- Baby carrots
- Celery sticks
- Cucumber
- Peppers
- Snap peas
- Snow peas
- String beans
- Grape or cherry tomatoes
- Yellow summer squash
- Zucchini slices

Low Fat Dairy Foods

Dairy foods are a great source of calcium, which can help to build strong bones. However, dairy products also are the biggest sources of artery-clogging saturated fat in kids' diets. To protect children's bones and hearts, make sure all dairy foods are low fat or nonfat after age 2.

- Yogurt
- Lower fat cheese like cheese sticks, Swiss cheese, and American cheese slices.
- Low fat pudding and frozen yogurt (*Serve only as occasional treats because they are high in added sugars.*)

Fruit

Fruit is naturally sweet, so most kids love it. Fruit can be served whole, sliced, cut in half, cubed, or in wedges. Canned, frozen, and dried fruits often need little preparation; choose varieties with no added sugar.

- Apples
- Apricots
- Bananas
- Blackberries
- Blueberries
- Cantaloupe
- Cherries
- Clementines
- Grapefruit
- Grapes (red, green, or purple)
- Honeydew melon
- Kiwifruit
- Mandarin oranges
- Mangoes
- Nectarines
- Oranges
- Peaches
- Pears

For dips: Try salad dressings such as light/low fat ranch or Thousand Island, store-bought light dips, bean dips, guacamole, hummus (which comes in a variety of flavors), salsa, or peanut butter.

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Healthy Kids' Snacks (continued)

- Pineapple
- Plums
- Raspberries
- Strawberries
- Tangerines
- Watermelon

Other popular fruit forms:

- Applesauce (unsweetened), fruit cups, and canned fruit
- Dried fruit—Try raisins, apricots, apples, cranberries, and fruit leathers with little or no added sugars.
- Frozen fruit
- Fruit salad—Get kids to help you make a fruit salad.
- Popsicles—Look for popsicles made from 100% fruit juice with no added caloric sweeteners.

Important for Toddlers!

Feed only age appropriate snacks.

Allow toddlers finger foods only under supervision. Be sure they stay seated as they eat and are not lying down or running around.

Avoid raw fruits and vegetables that snap into hard chunks, such as carrot and celery sticks and firm apples.

Peel and slice grapes. Whole grapes can cause choking.

Healthy Grains

Try to serve mostly whole grains, which provide more fiber, vitamins, and minerals than refined grains, and include a source of protein like peanut butter, hummus, or low fat cheese.

- Whole wheat English muffins, pita, or tortillas
- Breakfast cereal—either dry or with low fat milk. Whole grain cereals like Cheerios, Grape-Nuts, Raisin Bran, Frosted Mini-Wheats, and Wheaties make good snacks. Look for cereals with no more than about 8 grams of sugar per serving.
- Whole grain crackers like Triscuits
- Popcorn
- Baked tortilla chips
- Granola and cereal bars—look for whole grain granola bars that are low in fat and sugars.
- Pretzels, rice cakes, breadsticks, and flatbreads—these low fat items can be offered as snacks now and then. However, most of these snacks are not whole grain and most pretzels are high in salt.

Important!

Water should be the main drink served to kids at snack times. Water satisfies thirst and does not have sugar or calories. Plus, it's free or low-cost! If kids are used to getting sweetened beverages at snack times, it may take a little time for them to get used to drinking water. Be a great role model by drinking water yourself.



For more tips, go to www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy

