

Healthy Snacking at Home

Overview

Healthy snacking is crucial for children to fuel their growing bodies, stay focused and remain engaged throughout the day. Aim to make snack time at home healthy and fun with a few simple activities and a little thinking outside of the snack box.

Take Action

Explore the Mind-Body Connection

Food is our fuel for both the body and the mind. It helps us to be active and grow while also influencing how we feel. Invite children to reflect on how certain foods make you feel after eating them (e.g. energized, sleepy, etc.) Exploring this connection helps children choose foods that make them feel their best and make healthy choices.

Talk to your children about hunger cues by asking them how they feel when they are hungry versus full. Encourage children to pause and think about how they are feeling when they ask for a snack; are they hungry, bored, or both? It is important for children to learn how to listen to hunger cues so that they can develop healthy habits that support their body's needs.

Incorporate Balance

Each food group (grains, dairy, proteins, fruits, and vegetables) provides the body with essential vitamins and nutrients. Invite children to explore the nutrient makeup of their food and strive for a nice balance across food groups throughout the day. Keep a log, a journal or use to empower children to select healthy options.



- Foods such as whole grains, sweet potatoes and oats are packed with carbohydrates – an energy source to keep our engines running!
- Protein (found in nuts, beans, meat and meat alternatives, etc.) helps the body grow and repair itself. Dairy products including cheese, milk and yogurt are also a good source of protein along with calcium and vitamins to keep our bones and teeth healthy and strong.
- Fruits and vegetables are loaded with vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that help keep us feeling our best.

[Be mindful of portion sizes!](#) Snacks should be smaller in portion and should be just enough to hold your child over until the next.

Create Food Art or Spend Time in the Kitchen

The best part about healthy foods is that most of them are super colorful! Become an artist and get creative while [playing with food](#). For an added challenge, see how many foods from the 5 food groups, you can include in your masterpiece! Involving children in the kitchen is by far, the best way to teach them about the importance of healthy eating. Whether with food art, kitchen experiments or cooking together as a family, this hands-on learning creates an engaging environment where children can explore food and nutrition while developing critical thinking skills, explore personal preferences and tap into their own creativity.

Think on the Fly

Healthy snacking doesn't have to be fancy. Sometimes, cheese and crackers are the easiest and quickest option when you're in a time crunch. To save time, use a Sunday afternoon to chop bell peppers, carrots, and celery sticks for the upcoming week. Rather than put pressure on yourself, explore alongside your child and discover simple favorites together. Take a pantry or refrigerator inventory and see what delicious snacks you can come up with using what you have on hand!

AFHK Staff Favorite Recipes:

- Low-fat string cheese and a piece of fruit
- Homemade trail mix (nuts, dried fruit, cheerios, etc.)
- Apples/ bananas and natural peanut butter

- Whole wheat crackers/ cakes with smashed avocado or low-fat cheese slices
- Veggies (baby carrots, celery, cucumber slices, snap peas) and hummus or low-fat ranch

Tips



Involve your children in the making of snacks as much as possible. Everything tastes better when you make it yourself!



Use weekends to prepare certain snacks ahead of time. If you can, stick them in the freezer until they are needed or store in the refrigerator in Tupperware for quick access.



Incorporate as many fresh ingredients as possible. Next time you're at the grocery store, pick 2-3 favorite fruits and vegetables to snack on throughout the week.



Come Prepared by packing a snack for on-the-go excursions like going to the park or grocery shopping. Little snacks throughout the day between meals will help children keep bellies full.



Talk with children about the importance of healthy snacking and the time and place for special treats. Snacks are meant to fuel the body in between meals, so encourage them to think of swaps (e.g. a yogurt parfait in lieu of ice cream) and identify other times where a special treat might make more sense.

For more activities and ideas like this one, be sure to [sign up for our news and](#)

[updates](#). And if you like what you see, please [donate to support our work](#) creating more ways to help build a healthier future for kids.

Additional Resources

[Healthy Eating Toolkit \(Action for Healthy Kids\)](#) [Snacks \(KidsHealth\)](#)

[10 Tips: MyPlate Snack Tips for Parents](#) [Healthy Snacks \(Dole\)](#)

Smart Snacks Standards

Is your school smart snack savvy? The "Smart Snacks in School" rule set standards for all foods and beverages sold in schools that participate in the national school meal program.

Refreshing Summer Snacks

Satisfy those summer cravings with these healthy and refreshing treats.

Food Art

"Playing with your food" by creating food art is a great way to introduce healthy foods in a fun and interactive way.

Healthy Role Modeling at Home

Be a healthy role model to teach children how to develop valuable healthy habits.

