

Top Tips and Activities! Healthy Snacks



As a child were you ever told not to snack between meals? Well this statement isn't entirely true! As growing people, our children have high energy needs in relation to their size, and as long as the snacks they eat are healthy (low in fat, sugar and salt) and they don't eat so much that it stops them being hungry at meal times, then snacking is actually a good thing.

Healthy snacks are also important for children because their stomachs are smaller than adults; therefore they need to eat less but more frequently so that they meet their high energy and nutrient needs. Refueling their bodies is important to give children all the energy they require to be active throughout the day.

A guideline for snacking is morning, afternoon and an evening snack. However they don't have to eat a snack at these times if they are not hungry, and try to avoid giving your child(ren) snacks if they are bored, watching TV or if it's just "something to do"!

To make sure whatever your child(ren) is snacking on is healthy, try to stay away from simple carbohydrates such as sugars which are found in sweets, chocolate and fizzy drinks, and instead offer them complex carbohydrates such as breads and cereals and combine these with protein sources like yoghurt or cheese.

So what can you do to make sure the snacks your children are eating are healthy? Here are some helpful hints!

Prepare snacks in advance:

- Making your own snacks such as a muesli mix, means that you can control what foods go into them ... making sure that the snacks are healthy and nutritious.
- Keeping plenty of fruit and vegetables in your home also means you and the rest of the family can grab a healthy snack on the go. Why not prepare celery and carrots sticks in advance and keep them in the fridge?

Keep snacks with you:

- Develop good habits early by giving the children a piece of fresh fruit, baby carrots or wholegrain crackers to keep in their school bag so they always have access to a healthy snack

Make your snacks interesting:

- Having a variety of foods means that snacking does not have to be boring. Eating rice cakes or wholegrain crackers with peanut butter or choosing a low fat fruit yoghurt are enjoyable and easy healthy snacks.

Satisfy Cravings:

- Instead of ice cream why not freeze some yoghurt or freeze a homemade smoothie
- For savoury cravings try rice crackers, pop corn or pretzels instead of crisps and if you want a dip try salsa or guacamole.
- For a sweet craving like chocolate, try a hot chocolate drink instead which is lower in fat and calories than a chocolate bar, or snack on some dried fruit or grapes for their sweetness.

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Portion sizes:

- Be aware of snack sized foods, some foods which claim to be snack size are often 2 snack size servings meaning twice the calories, the fat, salt and sugar!

Snack suggestions:

So thinking about all the above information, what healthy foods can you and your children snack on?

- Fruit and vegetables – whole fresh fruit or vegetable sticks
- Pita bread or vegetable sticks with dips such as humus, salsa, guacamole or soft cheeses
- Muesli mix – mix oats, bran flakes, dried fruit, nuts and seeds

- Peanut butter on toast – add raisins or bananas for extra taste
- Mixed nuts – try to avoid salted varieties
- Low fat yoghurt
- Cheese – choose a small matchbox piece of cheese to eat with fruit such as grapes or apple or to have in a sandwich with wholegrain bread
- Ryvitas or crisp bread with a low fat cheese spread or peanut butter

All the above information is not only applicable to your children, but as adults you can also follow these guidelines and snack on these healthy options for a varied healthy diet.