

The Scoop on Healthy Snacking



Parents Corner:

Kids need to refuel their bodies many times during the day because they are growing, which takes a lot of energy, and they need a ton of energy for all the things they do. Swimming, walking, carrying a backpack, even playing on the computer require energy. Kids also have small stomachs that need to be filled frequently! That's where snacks come in: they give a little fuel to keep you from getting too tired and hungry. **Eating snacks keeps the brain sharp and the body moving.**

Imagine you're out playing and you suddenly feel a rumbling in your stomach. It's past lunch but not yet time for dinner – just the right time for a snack! Snack attacks are normal for kids, who need lots of energy from food to keep them going all day long. But when your snack attacks strike, do you know why you feel hungry? What are the best things to eat to get rid of your hunger and give your body great nutrients?

A good snacking guideline is to eat a snack or meal when you are hungry, about every 3 or 4 hours. Do you think snacking means crunching chips, munching marshmallows or gobbling up cookies? If you do, you're not alone. Some people think snacking is bad because they think of junk food when they think of snacks.



So should junk food be your snack? No way! Instead, keep some healthy snacks like granola bars or an apple in your backpack, so when snack attacks strike you can get rid of your hunger. Healthy snacks are packed with nutrients that your body needs to grow strong and stay healthy.

Does this mean that you can never sink your teeth into a sweet or salty snack that you love? Of course not! It's OK to eat junk food in moderation (this means only every so often and not much of the food at once). Just remember that most of your snacks should be healthy foods.



Here's a list of easy, healthy snack ideas to get you started:

- Low-fat cheese and crackers
- Cereal bar or granola bar
- Light microwave popcorn or air-popped popcorn
- Celery with 1 tablespoon peanut butter or cream cheese
- Orange or other fresh fruit
- Peanut butter and crackers
- Low-fat or nonfat yogurt
- Raisins
- Canned fruit (canned in own juice or water)
- Graham crackers with 1 cup skim milk or 1 tablespoon peanut butter
- Pretzels
- Baby carrots with up to 2 tablespoons reduced-fat ranch dressing
- Eight mini or two standard-size rice cakes or popcorn cakes (try caramel corn or cheddar cheese flavors)



What should you drink with your snacks? Drink either milk, water, or 100 percent fruit juice. Those are your best choices for drinks.

If you have a super-size snack attack, try one of these choices:

- Whole-wheat pita bread stuffed with tuna
- English muffin (or bagel) pizza
- Cereal with low-fat or skim milk
- Peanut butter and jelly sandwich (use whole-wheat bread)
- Oatmeal



Adapted from

"When Snack Attacks Strike," Healthy Kids Web site

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