



Snacks for Healthy Kids

Smart Snack Strategies

1 Plan snacks as part of daily food choices

- Provide snack choices from several food groups
- Schedule regular snack times and amounts; don't let children nibble constantly during the day (more on page 2)

2 Encourage label detectives

- Limit convenience-type snacks that are high in sugar, fat, and salt and use excessive packaging (more on page 2)

3 Create snack stations

- Package your own ready-to-go snacks
- Allow children to make their own snacks (more on page 3)

4 Provide chef-in-training opportunities

- Let youngsters help pick out fruits, vegetables, and cheeses when shopping
- Include children in snack food preparation
- Use snacks to introduce new foods (more on page 4)

→ Bottom line

Healthy snacks supply energy and help meet a child's daily nutrition requirement. Do-it-yourself snacks help children practice independence.

Kids are experts at snacking

According to a United States Department of Agriculture study, after-school snacks provide about one-third of children's calories. Because children have smaller stomachs, they need the energy and nutrients provided by these mini-meals. However, when high fat, high sugar snack foods are combined with screen time—either TV or computer—instead of active play time, children are likely to gain more weight than they should for optimum health.

Choosing food implies having POWER

Refusing to eat certain foods or demanding to eat others is one way children practice their growing independence. They test values and decide which ones to reject, modify, and adopt. Consequently, doing what everyone else is doing may become more tempting than doing what parents have taught.

The key for parents and caregivers is to strike a balance between providing good nutrition and letting children make independent decisions. One way to do this is by offering a wide variety of foods. Provide food choices that offer a range of taste experiences, such as crunchy, soft, chewy, smooth, hot, cold, sweet, sour, bland, and spicy.

Food should never be used as a reward for good behavior, or withheld as punishment for bad behavior.

Focus on physical activity as well as food

All children benefit from physical activity—walking, riding bikes, or playing together is a great way to build family communication. If your child shows a tendency toward being overweight, encourage more physical activity and less screen

time at the television or computer.

Do not cut back drastically on food intake.

Children need those nutrients for growth and development.



Distinguish between food facts and myths

Current research does not support claims that sugar and food colors are linked to hyperactivity, criminal behavior, or increased anxiety. However, meal-skipping, especially breakfast, has been shown to harm children's performance in school.

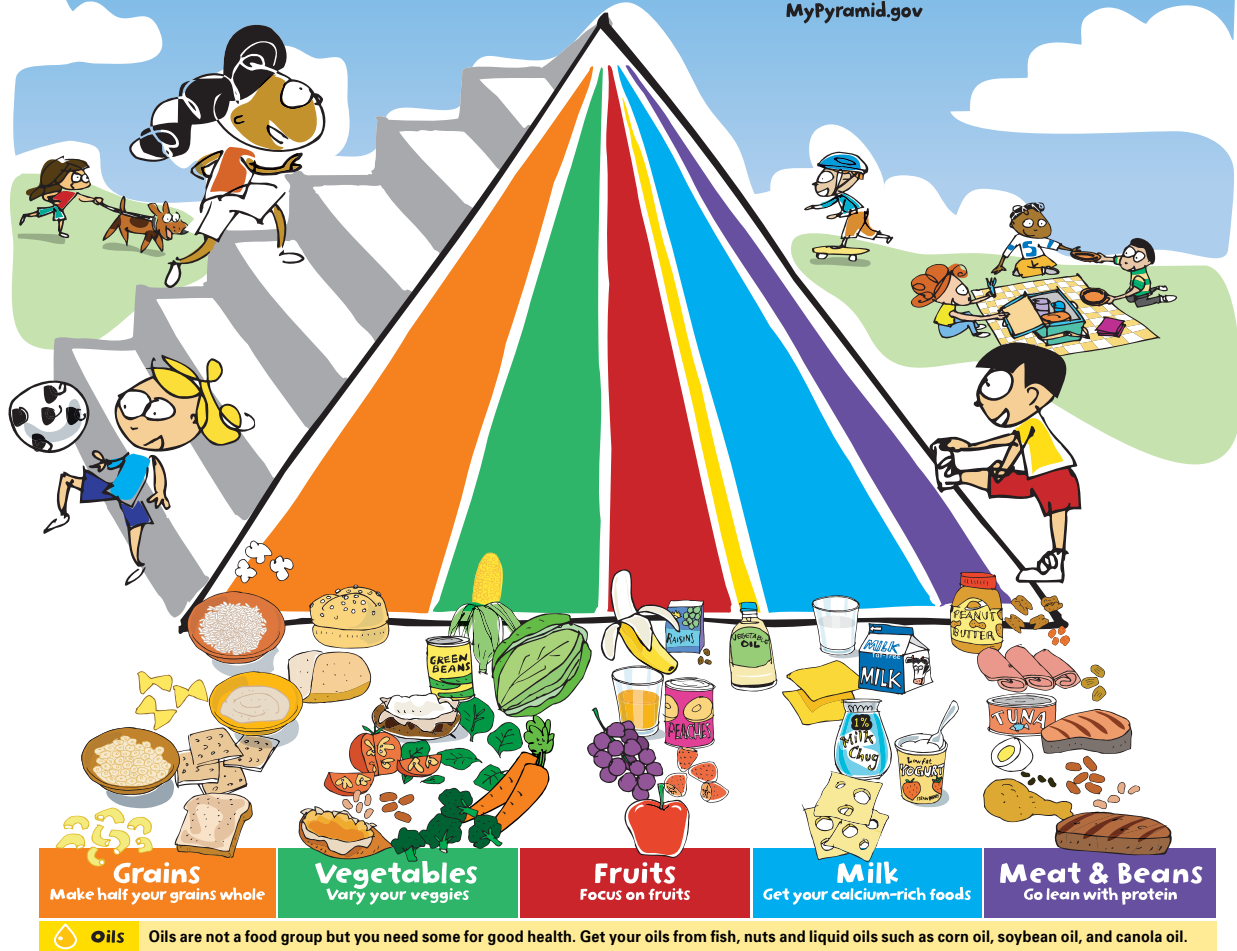
1 Plan snack choices

Offer snacks that fulfill part of the daily recommendation for these food groups.

MyPyramid For Kids

Eat Right. Exercise. Have Fun.

MyPyramid.gov



Grains Make half your grains whole
Vegetables Vary your veggies
Fruits Focus on fruits
Milk Get your calcium-rich foods
Meat & Beans Go lean with protein

Oils Oils are not a food group but you need some for good health. Get your oils from fish, nuts and liquid oils such as corn oil, soybean oil, and canola oil.

★ Find your balance between food and fun ★ Fats and sugars — know your limits

	Grains	Veggies	Fruits	Oil	Milk	Meat & Beans
2-6 years	5 oz. equivalent	1½ cups	1½ cups	4 tsp.	2 cups	4 oz. equivalent
7-13 years	6 oz. equivalent	2½ cups	1½-2 cups	5-6 tsp.	3 cups	5-5½ oz. equivalent
14-18 years*	6-9 oz. equivalent	2½-3½ cups	2 cups	6-8 tsp.	3 cups	5½-6½ oz. equivalent

Recommended food intake is based on children who get 30 to 60 minutes of moderate activity, such as walking briskly or biking.
 *Lower end of range represents the moderately active female while the upper end of the range represents the moderately active male.

2 Encourage label detectives

For snacks that do not fit in the MyPyramid For Kids groups, examine the fat, sodium, and sugar content on the label.

Choose more snacks that have:

- 2 or more grams of fiber
- 10% of the Daily Value for one of the following:
 - Vitamin A
 - Vitamin C
 - Calcium
 - Iron

Choose fewer snacks that have:

- 10% or more of the Daily Value for total fat
- 10% or more of the Daily Value for sodium
- More than 10 to 15 grams of sugar
 → Remember that every 4 grams equal 1 teaspoon of sugar.



3 Create snack stations

To help children practice making snack choices, some families set up snack areas in the refrigerator and in a kitchen cupboard. Children are allowed to choose from either.

Yummy help-yourself cupboard snacks

Place these on a shelf in a cupboard that children can reach.

Fruit group

100% fruit roll-ups
Apple rings, dried
Apricots, dried
Banana halves
Prunes, pitted
Raisins
Cranberries, dried
Pineapple, dried

Meat group

Peanut butter
Roasted soy nuts or pumpkin seeds
Sunflower seeds

Bread group

(Choose whole grain options most often; look for whole grain as the first ingredient.)

Bagel
Banana bread
Breadstick
Bread, whole grain or enriched
Cereal pieces, low sugar (such as Cheerios®, Chex®, Crispix®)
Cookies
Cornbread
Crackers (animal, graham, oyster, whole grain)
English muffin
Granola, low fat
Muffins, low fat
Pita bread
Popcorn*
Pumpkin bread
Pretzel, soft
Raisin bread
Vanilla wafers
Whole wheat tortillas



Chilly help-yourself refrigerator snacks

Place these snacks in a storage bin or on a shelf in the lower part of the refrigerator so that children can reach them. Also, be sure children have access to water in a cup or bottle.



Vegetable group

Baby carrots*
Cauliflowerettes, slightly cooked, chilled
Celery sticks*
Celery stuffed with peanut butter or cheese*
Green or red pepper pieces*
Vegetable juices
Cherry tomatoes*
Zucchini pieces*
Ranch Dip (See page 4)

Super snacks in seconds

Here are some examples of how you and your child could combine foods from the two snack stations for a nutritious snack:

Oatmeal cookies and milk
Raw vegetables and cheese dip
Cheese and crackers
Cottage cheese and fresh fruit
Raisin bread toast and fruit juice

Fruit group

Apple wedges*
Apple wedges, peeled
Applesauce
Apricots, fresh or canned
Banana chunks
Fruit slushes
Fruitsicles, frozen
Grapes, seedless*
100% juice boxes
Kiwi halves
Melon pieces
Nectarine, fresh
Orange sections
Tangerine segments
Peach or pear pieces, fresh or canned in juice
Pineapple chunks
Plums, fresh or canned
Strawberries

Milk group

(Choose low-fat milk options most often.)

Cheese cubes or slices
String cheese
Fruit yogurt
Milk, plain or flavored
Pudding cups
Cottage cheese

Meat group

Hard-cooked egg

Pears or apples, cheese, and milk
Hard-cooked egg and cherry tomatoes
Fresh fruit with yogurt dip
Kabobs made with fruit and cheese
String cheese and fruit juice
Celery with peanut butter and fruit juice
Sliced apple with peanut butter dip and fruit juice



***Caution: These foods may cause choking in children under the age of 5.**

Money saving tip: Make your own ready-to-go snacks by portioning them into small plastic bags or reusable plastic containers.

4 Provide chef-in-training opportunities

Healthy snacks taste even better when kids create them with their own hands.

Banana Smoothie

Make up your own variations using other fruits and juices.

1 small frozen banana, cut in chunks
1/2 cup plain low-fat yogurt
1/4 cup orange juice

Put all ingredients in blender and whirl until smooth. These are fairly thick. Add more liquid if you want them thinner.

Makes two 1/2-cup servings.

Per serving: 125 calories, 7 grams protein, 213 mg calcium, 10 mg vitamin C, 160 mg sodium.

Raisin Banana Mini Muffins**

2 very ripe, medium bananas, peeled
1 egg, beaten
1/3 cup vegetable oil
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup sugar
6 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 cup raisins

Spray muffin pan with cooking spray. Preheat oven to 350° F.

Put bananas into food processor or blender. Secure lid and blend until smooth. Add egg and oil; cover and blend. In mixing bowl, combine flour, sugar, cocoa, baking soda, salt, and baking powder. Add banana mixture, and stir until moistened. Stir in raisins.

Spoon about 1 tablespoon of batter into each muffin pan cup. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes. Cool muffins slightly before removing from pan.

Makes 36 mini-muffins.

Per muffin: 55 calories, 1 gram protein, 2 grams fat, 9 grams carbohydrate, 43 mg sodium, 3 mg cholesterol

* Adapted from: Better Food for Kids, Saab, J. and Kalnins, D. Robert Rose Inc. Toronto, Ontario 2002

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Ranch Dip for Veggies*

2/3 cup light sour cream
1/3 cup light mayonnaise
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
1 teaspoon dried dill
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
Pinch of salt
Pinch of freshly ground black pepper

In a small bowl, whisk together sour cream, mayonnaise, and vinegar until smooth. Add dill, mustard, salt, and pepper. Whisk to blend. Cover and refrigerate up to one week.

Makes four 1/4-cup servings.

Per serving: 104 calories, 1 gram protein, 9 grams fat, 5 grams carbohydrate, 128 mg sodium, 21 mg cholesterol

Mild Salsa Cheese Dip*

1/2 cup mild salsa
1 cup shredded light cheddar cheese
4 ounces light cream cheese
1 to 2 tablespoons ketchup

In a small microwavable bowl, combine salsa, cheddar cheese, and cream cheese. Microwave on medium for 1 minute or until cheeses are melted. Stir in ketchup until mixture is smooth. Cover and refrigerate up to one week, reheating when served. Good with veggies and crackers.

Makes four 1/4-cup servings.

Per serving: 128 calories, 10 grams protein, 6 grams fat, 6 grams carbohydrate, 615 mg sodium, 19 mg cholesterol

Fruity Parfait**

Create your own variations by using other fruits as desired.
2 cups chopped fresh pineapple or canned pineapple tidbits
1 cup frozen raspberries, thawed
1 cup low-fat vanilla yogurt
1 firm, medium banana, peeled and sliced
1/3 cup chopped dates
1/4 cup sliced almonds

In four glasses, layer pineapple, raspberries, yogurt, banana, and dates. Sprinkle the top with almonds.

Makes four servings.

Per parfait: 258 calories, 6 grams protein, 5 grams fat, 47 grams carbohydrate, 43 mg sodium, 3 mg cholesterol

Check these resources

Center for Science in the Public Interest
www.cspinet.org/healthysnacks

Fruits & Veggies More Matters™
www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/

Fruit & Veggie Color Champions™ (for kids)
www.foodchamps.org/

Iowa State University Extension Nutrition
www.extension.iastate.edu/healthnutrition/

Iowa State University Extension Publications
www.extension.iastate.edu/store

Live Healthy Iowa
www.lighteniowa.org

Michigan State University Team Nutrition Booklist and Preschool Booklist 2006
www.tn.fcs.msu.edu/resources.html

MyPyramid for Kids
www.mypyramid.gov/kids/index.html

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