

# Why Snacks?

**Most kids like snacks. That's great! Think of snacks as mini-meals that help provide nutrients and food energy your child needs to grow, play, and learn.**

## Help your child snack smart.

Your child has a small stomach. So he or she probably eats less at meals than you do. Smart snacks can help your child eat and drink enough during the day. In fact, most young children do best when they eat four to six times a day.

**Keep food group snacks handy:** for example, raw vegetables, fruit, juice, milk, cheese, yogurt, bread, peanut butter, and hard-cooked eggs.

**Let snacks fill in the gaps.** If your child misses juice for breakfast, offer fruit at snack time.

**Time snacks carefully** – two to three hours before meals. That way your child will be hungry for lunch or supper.

**Offer snacks to satisfy hunger.** Skip the urge to offer a snack to quiet tears, calm your child, or reward behavior. That can lead to emotional overeating later on.

**Keep snacks small.** If your child is still hungry, he or she can ask for more. Let your child decide what's enough.

**Encourage tooth brushing after snacking** – especially after eating bread, crackers, and sweet foods.

**Snack wisely yourself!** Do you snack when you feel stressed or bored – or just when you're hungry? What foods do you snack on? Remember, your child learns snack habits by watching you. Be a great role model!



## Go easy on snacks with added sugars.

**Offer milk, juice, or water as snack drinks.** Soft drinks and fruit drinks can crowd out foods your child needs to grow and stay healthy.

**Make food group foods the usual snacks.** A little candy occasionally is okay.

### Parenting tip:

Sometimes kids say they're hungry when they really want attention. Take a little time with your child – talk or do something fun. Your child will let you know if he or she really is hungry.

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Smart snacking is good for your whole family!

## Fun for Kids!

### Quick snacks:

- Whole fruit, sliced into finger foods
- Berries
- Raw, cut-up vegetables
- Graham crackers
- String cheese
- Cheese and crackers
- Bagel and peanut butter
- Frozen yogurt



### Easy-to-make snacks:

- **Milk shake-ups:** Pour milk, juice, and ice in a covered container. Shake!
- **Fruit juice pops:** Freeze fruit juice in small paper cups or ice cube trays.
- **Crunchy banana:** Peel bananas. Roll them in peanut butter or yogurt, and crushed cereal. Freeze!
- **Peanut butter logs:** Fill celery with peanut butter.
- **Cinnamon toast:** Toast whole wheat bread. Spread a little margarine or butter on top. Sprinkle with cinnamon sugar.

### Your child's favorite food-group snacks:

*Offer milk or juice with snacks.*