

# Healthy Snacks for Children<sup>1</sup>

Center for Science in the Public Interest<sup>2</sup>

Healthy snacks can help children get the nutrients they need to grow and play. Offering healthy snacks also can help children form lifelong healthy eating habits. Try some of these ideas!

## Fruits and Vegetables

Serve fruits and vegetables often. Canned, frozen, and dried fruits store well and need little preparation. Get kids interested by letting them pick a new fruit or vegetable at the grocery store. Or let them help grow a fruit or vegetable garden. Give these a try:

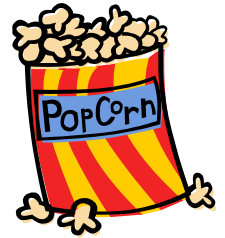


- ✓ Fresh fruits and vegetables served whole, sliced, cut in half, cubed, or in wedges. Serve veggies with a low-fat salad dressing dip.
- ✓ Frozen fruit
- ✓ Fruit salad
- ✓ Fruit cups or fruit canned in juice or light syrup
- ✓ Dried fruit or fruit leathers with no added sugar
- ✓ Homemade smoothies or fruit juice popsicles
- ✓ Vegetables dipped in hummus, bean dip, or salad dressing
- ✓ Veggie pockets in whole-wheat pita bread

## Healthy Grains

Choose whole grain foods that are low in fat and sugar. Look for breads, cereals, and other grain foods that have *whole* wheat or another whole grain listed as the first ingredient. Here are some good choices:

- ✓ Whole-grain breads, English muffins, pita, tortillas, crackers, breadsticks, or flatbreads
- ✓ Whole-grain cereals
- ✓ Whole-grain tortilla chips, granola, or cereal bars
- ✓ Popcorn



Pretzels, goldfish crackers, white bread, and other refined grains have less fiber, vitamins, and minerals than whole grains. Use whole grain foods more often. It's a good idea to make at least half of your grain food choices whole grains.

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2. Adapted for use in Florida with permission from *Healthy Snacks for Children*, Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2006, by Jennifer Hillan, MSH, RD, LD/N, ENAFS nutrition educator, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.

## Milk, Yogurt, and Cheese

Offer children low-fat or fat-free snacks, such as:

- ✓ Low-fat pudding
- ✓ Low-fat or fat-free milk
- ✓ Low-fat cottage cheese
- ✓ Low-fat string cheese



Cheese is high in saturated fat, so serve small portions and serve cheese with other foods like fruit, vegetables, or whole-grain crackers.

## Nuts and Trail Mix

Nuts are a good source of many vitamins and minerals, but they also are high in calories. Offer small portions (a small handful) and serve them with another food, such as fruit.

To avoid a choking hazard, do **NOT** give whole nuts to very young children. They need to be able to chew well to handle eating whole nuts. Also, if family members have food allergies, offer only one type of nut at a time. If there is no allergic reaction, you can introduce another type of nut after about one week.

## Healthy Beverages

- ✓ Offer low-fat and fat-free milk instead of whole and 2% milk. Children will get the same amount of calcium, vitamin D, and other nutrients, but not all the fat found in whole and 2% milk.
- ✓ Soy and rice “milks” also are healthy choices if they are fortified with calcium and vitamin D (read the label).
- ✓ Water is a low-cost drink that satisfies thirst without adding calories or sugars.
- ✓ Calorie-free seltzer or sparkling waters are healthy choices.
- ✓ Limit fruit juice to six ounces for one- to six-year-olds and 12 ounces for seven- to eighteen-year-olds. Choose only 100% fruit juice with no added sugar or high fructose corn syrup.



We gratefully acknowledge the Center for Science in the Public Interest for giving us permission to create this adaptation of their *Healthy Snacks for Children* publication. You can visit their Web site at: [www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy](http://www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy).

Children under the age of two should NOT be given low-fat or fat-free milk. They need the extra fat found in whole milk to grow and develop. Fat and cholesterol both are important for brain development in babies! After age two, they can begin the move to low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk.

