

Snack ideas for the under 5's

Encouraging young children to eat healthy family meals and nutritious snacks can be a challenge. This is especially true as children grow and start to develop their own ideas about the foods they like and dislike.

Although children tend to prefer foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar, we should be trying to encourage and offer snacks that are healthier and more nutritious.

This leaflet provides suggestions of healthy snacks as well as ideas on how to encourage children to develop good eating habits that will support a child's healthy growth and development into adulthood.



Scan me

Snacks

- Do they need them?

Question

At home does my 4 year old need to have snacks between meals? I know that nursery is keen for him to have a snack.

Answer

All children need a variety of food to make sure that they get all the nutrients they require to grow and develop properly. Some children, especially pre-school children can have small appetites and need regular meals with snacks in between to make sure that they get enough energy, vital vitamins and minerals.

By the age of 4, some children may need fewer snacks; however, these still need to be healthy. Offering a healthy snack at home will encourage your child to continue to experiment and enjoy healthy food.



Snacks

- Do they need to be healthy?

Question

Does it matter what food I give my child at snack time even if the rest of their food is healthy?

Answer

Yes - even although your child's meals are healthy it is important to continue to build on their experience of healthy food. High calorie snacks like sweets, chocolate, biscuits, fizzy juice and squash can lead to tooth decay and dull their appetite for healthy food.

By helping your child to learn about and develop a taste for healthy food, you could reduce their risk of obesity, heart disease and diabetes in later life.



Snacks

- What is healthy?

Question

I am confused what is a suitable snack. Can you give me a few ideas to try with my 3 year old son?

Answer

A healthy snack means food and drink that is low in sugar and salt and contains vitamins and minerals such as calcium. The next page gives suggestions of foods which are nutritious and make ideal snacks - please make sure these are cut into child friendly pieces.

Snacks

- Healthy options!

FRUIT

banana, apple, melon, strawberries, orange, kiwi, pear, pineapple, blueberries, tinned fruit in juice, grapes (sliced lengthways)

Offer fruit and vegetables that are in season. They taste better, cost less and it's better for the planet.

VEGETABLES

carrot, cucumber, cherry tomatoes (sliced), cauliflower, celery, baby sweetcorn, red/yellow/orange pepper

Chopping fruit and vegetables into small pieces - this may encourage children to try new foods.

BREAD/PLAIN CRACKERS

bagel, toast, crackers, bread sticks, english muffin, pancake, teacake, oatcakes, crumpet, ricecakes, melba toast, pitta bread

CHEESE

edam, cheddar, stilton with apricot pieces, pasteurised brie, smoked cheese, triangle of cheese spread, cheese strings

Snacks

- More options!

YOGHURT

Natural yoghurt or lower sugar varieties of flavoured yoghurts or fromage frais.

DIPS

Dips can be a fun way to encourage young children to try different foods in particular vegetables or salad.

There are a number of dips available in the shops or they can be easily made. Examples: hummus (chickpea), tzatziki (natural yoghurt and cucumber), salsa (mild tomato), thousand island, guacamole (avocado).

Although these dips give the body important nutrients and can encourage preschool children to eat vegetables, salad and other healthy foods, they may be high in fat, so only small amounts should be encouraged.

Snacks

- Encouraging healthy choices!

Question

No matter how hard I try to encourage my child to eat fruit for a snack, all they want to eat is crisps and sweets. What can I do?

Answer

It can be difficult to encourage children to eat healthy snacks. If a child is involved in preparing their snack then they are more likely to eat it.

Spend time together doing this, as well as being fun, it will help your child find out more about healthy food which may encourage them to try different snacks.

Make snack time a fun time - allow children to create pieces of art with their snack food, that can then be eaten. Try a colourful rainbow or a fruity face.



Snacks

- fun foods!

APPLE NACHOS

This snack is best made just before serving.

Foods: apple (sliced)
cheddar cheese (grated)
plain unsalted tortilla chips

Topping: cherry tomato (cut into quarters)

Utensils: knife
grater
chopping board

1. Wash cherry tomato and apple.
2. Chop apple into thin slices.
3. Cut cherry tomato into quarters.
4. Grate cheddar cheese.
5. Onto a plain tortilla chip sprinkle a little grated cheese, add a thin slice of apple then top with a piece of cherry tomato.

Snacks

- fun foods!

FRUITY TUMBLE CRUMBLES

This snack is best made just before serving. Allow children to experiment. Try different fruits with different colours in each layer.

Foods: fruit tinned in natural juice e.g. pears, peaches, pineapple
natural yoghurt
cereal e.g. corn flakes, crispy rice, multi grain hoops, puffed wheat

Utensils: tin opener
clear cup or container
knife
spoon
chopping board



Choose lower
sugar cereals.

1. Drain juice from the tin, then chop fruit into small chunks.
2. Spoon chopped fruit into bottom of clear cup or container.
3. Spoon yoghurt on top of the fruit layer.
4. Sprinkle cereal over the yoghurt.
5. Repeat the layers if desired.

Snacks

- Healthy drinks!

Question

My dentist has advised that between meals I should give my child plain water or milk but unfortunately he is not fond of either. Can I use diluting squash or fruit juice instead?

Answer

This is good advice from your dentist. Milk and plain water are the only drinks that will not cause tooth decay.

Diluting squash even sugar free and fruit juice can contribute to tooth erosion and decay. It is advised that they are drunk only at mealtimes and where possible dilute well with water.

Answer continued on the next page.

Q. A.

Snacks

- Healthy drinks!

Answer Cont...

Some children are not fond of drinking milk and it can be helpful to encourage them by blending fruit into milk to make a milk-based smoothie.

You can use either fresh, frozen or drained tinned fruit in juice. Strawberries, blueberries, bananas and mangos are ideal and make delicious fruity milkshake drinks which are popular with children.

Milk-based smoothies, milkshakes and fruit juice all contain sugars and can cause tooth decay.

Keep these fruity drinks to mealtimes and serve as an occasional treat.



Snacks

- Problems with milk?

Question

My 3 year old son has had milk intolerance since birth and I am looking for new snack ideas. He is bored with **fruit** and wants to eat the same food as the rest of the family, which is not always suitable. What can I do?

Answer

It can be difficult to think of new ideas and it is easy to get into a rut with food. This is true even when there is not a food intolerance. Sometimes children like to feel different and have their own special food, others want what everyone else has which can make it difficult to manage.

The next page lists a few snack ideas which tend to be milk free however always check food labels for milk by reading the ingredient list.



Snacks

- Milk free!

VEGETABLES

carrot, cucumber, cherry tomatoes, cauliflower, baby sweetcorn, celery, red/yellow/orange pepper slices

BREAD/PLAIN CRACKERS

bagel, toast, crackers, bread sticks, english muffin, pancake, teacake, oatcakes, crumpet, ricecakes, melba toast, pitta bread

DIPS

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There are a number of dips available in the shops or they can be easily made. Examples: hummus (chickpea), salsa (mild tomato), thousand island, guacamole (avocado).

Remember to check food labels for milk.

Snacks

- Milk free fun foods!

Below are a couple of easy to prepare milk free ideas. If your child is bored with fruit, these ideas may help to encourage him to include some fruit. Although they are nourishing it is recommended that they are not taken as a snack and are best served after a meal.

SOYA YOGHURT SHAKE

Foods: 150 g strawberry-flavoured soya yoghurt
150 ml soya milk
8 strawberries washed and remove the stalk
½ banana peeled and chopped

Utensils: food blender
chopping board
knife

Place all the ingredients into a blender and whiz until smooth.

FRUIT LOLLIES

Make fruit lollies by pureeing/mashing fruit mixed with an equal amount of raspberry soya yoghurt. Examples of fruit include strawberries, mango, banana and raspberries. Freeze the fruit and yoghurt mixture in reusable lolly moulds.

Snacks

- Useful websites!

www.child-smile.org.uk - Childsmile has oral health information for parents, carers and professionals. It has information on caring for children's teeth - from teaching tooth brushing skills to ideas of healthy snacks and drinks as well as a number of downloadable resources.

www.firststepsnutrition.org - First Steps Nutrition Trust provides information and resources to support eating well from pre-conception to five years.

www.foodafactoflife.org.uk - Food A Fact of Life is a website for all those involved in educating people, particularly young people, about food and nutrition. It has free resources for teaching about where food comes from, cooking, easy recipes and healthy eating.

www.nhsforthvalley.com/nutrition - NHS Forth Valley 'Community Nutrition' website has several web pages with links and downloadable food and nutrition related resources: Early Years Nutrition, Food and Health Inequalities, Nutrition Resources and Food in Schools...

www.parentclub.scot - Parent Club has recipe ideas and eating tips for the whole family, there's information on healthy snacking, food safety, meal planning and cook along videos demonstrating how to cook healthy family meals and dishes from scratch.

