

Why have regular meal and snack times?


Offering your child food regularly encourages them to understand their own appetite. Snacks and meals are both very important to your child's nutrition. Young children can only eat a little at each mealtime (due to the small size of their stomach), and need regular opportunities over the day to eat in order to get enough nutrients and have the energy they need for growth, health and play.

Tips for snack times:


- In addition to 3 main meals, aim to include 2-3 snacks daily
- Try to avoid snack foods that are low in dietary fibre and nutrients, and high in fat, sugar and salt, i.e. 'junk food' – for example potato chips and chocolate bars
- Foods should be chosen from one or more of the five food groups. This will ensure your child receives all the nutrients they need for growth, for energy and to keep their bodies healthy
- Include a drink of water with every snack

Using the 5 food groups, some examples of snack ideas for your child include:

Vegetables and legumes/beans

- Corn on the cob
- Celery/carrot/cucumber sticks/ snow peas/ celery sticks with low fat cheese spread/salsa/hummus/peanut paste*
- Vegetable kebabs – cherry tomatoes, cucumber, celery, capsicum, lean ham and cheese
- Vegetable fritters 

Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties


- English muffin with peanut paste* and banana
- Rice cakes / wholegrain crackers with hummus /avocado and tomato / peanut paste / reduced fat cheese
- Small low fat muffins/pikelets (savoury or fruit) – look for recipes that use wholemeal flour or added bran
- Plain popcorn
- Raisin bread/toast 
- Weet-bix™ with chopped banana




Fruit

- Fresh whole fruit (apple, apricot, banana, kiwi fruit, orange, pear, plum)
- Fruit kebabs—bananas, watermelon, honeydew and strawberries 
- Tinned fruit in natural juice
- Dried fruit – sultanas, dried apple, dried apricot, prunes, dates
- Fruit salad with reduced fat yoghurt
- Fruit slushies – blend fruit, add extra water if too thick then freeze
- Frozen fruit – e.g. orange, banana, watermelon, grapes
- Smoothies – blend reduced fat yoghurt, milk and fruit, e.g. bananas, berries
- Traffic lights – rounds of kiwifruit, watermelon and banana
- Fruit flower – balls of melon surrounded by orange segments with a stem of banana

Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes and beans

- Boiled egg and wholemeal toast soldiers
- Handful of raw nuts* 
- Canned tuna and crackers

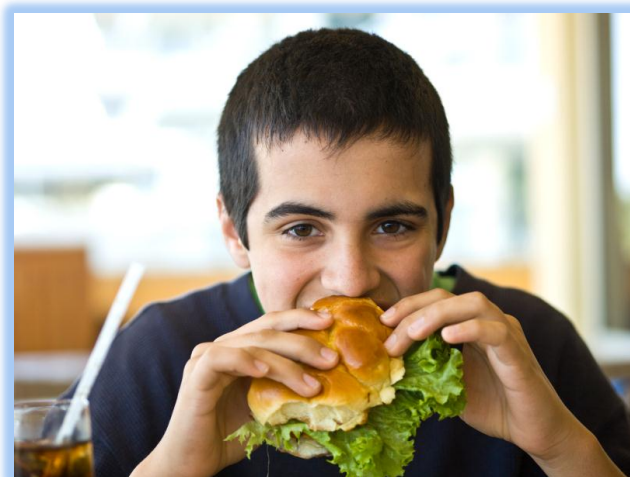
Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives, mostly reduced fat

- Glass of reduced fat milk
- Tub of reduced fat yoghurt
- Piece of reduced fat cheese 
- Reduced fat cheese on toast/crackers

* Nuts needs to be avoided if children have a nut allergy or if they are going to eat the snack at a setting where there is a nut free policy.

Some examples of snacks for older, very active and growing children:

- Toasted Jaffles – wholemeal bread filled with baked beans or reduced fat cheese and tomato
- Baked potato filled with tuna or creamed corn and topped with reduced fat cheese
- Pita bread nachos – pita bread slices baked in oven until crisp, sprinkled with chopped tomato and cheese
- Homemade pizza – wholemeal pita bread spread with tomato paste, topped with: chopped lean ham, tomato, canned corn and reduced fat cheese
- Sandwich/wrap – wholemeal or grain bread filled with reduced fat cheese/lean meat and salad



For healthy recipes:

- <http://www.healthyfoodhealthyplanet.org/healthy-recipes>
- www.daa.asn.au/for-the-public/smart-eating-for-you/recipes/browse/

Check out our other fact sheets:

- How much should children eat?
- What is a serve?
- What is a family meal?
- Happy and relaxed mealtimes for children
- Encouraging different foods to children