



Nutrition Nibbles

Snack Craze: Feeding Kids to Thrive

*This article is in honor of some of my youngest clients, our Funfoodle participants!
www.facebook.com/Funfoodle*

Kids love snacks! Something light between meals can really help bridge the nutrition gap for growing children and fuel them to thrive at school and during play. There is a fine line, though, between smart snacking and snack grazing. What is considered an appropriate snack? How often should children nosh between meals?

Snack Craze Does Not Mean Snack Graze

A study published in March 2010 found that the incidence of snacking in children increased dramatically over the past thirty years. Kids now eat an average of three daily snacks (as compared to one daily in 1977) and consume an additional 168 calories from frequent snacks. Snack time favorites for kids of all ages include high fat, high salt foods like chips and crackers, as well as candy and sweets, fruit juices, and sports drinks. With a little over a quarter of kids' calories coming from foods eaten between meals, parents need to rethink when and what their children are eating.

Smart Snacking

Research shows that between-meal bites can improve the quality of a child's diet by increasing protein, calcium and iron consumption.

Rather than letting children eat whatever they would like, whenever they want, parents should establish a family wide smart snacking routine. Just follow the 2x2 rule. Aim for no more than two snacks each day. Mid-morning and afternoon work well for snack breaks because kids need brain power to concentrate in school and fuel to keep up with after-school sports and activities. Each snack should contain a minimum of two food groups, to ensure a wider variety of nutrients are provided, including protein, vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Parents should encourage water as the go-to beverage of choice at snack time. Well-hydrated kids feel and perform better.

Snack-Size My Family

How large is a snack? Rather than focusing on calories, focus on serving sizes instead. Parents should start by offering their kids a standard serving from each food group provided. For example, mom could give her child ½ of a banana with a string cheese stick and a glass of water. If the child remains hungry after the initial amount is consumed, more food should be offered until the child is satisfied. Snack time presents a great opportunity to encourage children to tune in to their natural hunger and satiety cues. Read on to learn more about children's standard serving sizes and smart snack suggestions.

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College Corner: Color Your Palette

March is National Nutrition Month® and this year's theme is Eat Right with Color. In honor of my favorite month, I thought I'd provide a rainbow of ways to incorporate tasty, colorful, wholesome nutrition into your daily diet.

- **Red:** Toss a handful of red raspberries on your morning yogurt. Add some roasted red peppers to your next sandwich. Snack on some red grapes or dried cranberries.
- **Orange:** Mashed yams make a delicious side dish and canned pumpkin is a tasty addition to your breakfast oatmeal.
- **Yellow:** Why not give roasted yellow carrots a try? Or for something less exotic, top your dinner salad with yellow corn kernels and yellow peppers. Bananas are the most portable snack around.

National Nutrition Month® 2011



**Questions or Comments? Email me at
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Snack Craze continued...

Box 1: Serving Up Snacks

Food Group	Serving Size
Grains , preferably whole grains	1 slice bread, ½ cup cooked pasta, rice, or cereal, 1 cup cold cereal
Fruits , choose whole fruit over juice	1 medium piece, ½ large banana, ½ cup chopped fruit, ¼ cup dried fruit
Vegetables	½ cup chopped vegetables (cooked or raw), 1 cup leafy greens (lettuce)
Dairy , preferably 1% or fat free	1 cup milk, 1 cup yogurt, 1 ½ oz cheese
Protein	1 oz meat, fish, or poultry, 1 egg, 1 Tbsp peanut butter, ½ oz nuts, ¼ cup dried beans

Smart Snack Craze Suggestions

- 1 medium apple with 1 Tablespoon nut butter
- 1 cup whole grain, unsweetened cereal topped with fresh berries and 1 cup 1% milk
- ½ whole wheat pita with ¼ cup hummus and ½ cup sliced veggies
- 1 cup low fat plain Greek yogurt mixed with ½ cup fruit and drizzled with honey
- 6" corn tortilla with ¼ cup black beans, a sprinkling of cheese, salsa, and sliced avocado
- Whole wheat English muffin topped with marinara sauce, 1 ½ ounces shredded cheese, olives, and veggies
- ¼ cup cottage cheese with ½ cup diced pineapple
- ½ peanut butter and jelly sandwich with sliced bananas inside
- 1 oz lunchmeat, 1 slice cheese and 1 pickle spear rolled in a lettuce leaf
- 1 cup steamed edamame in the pods with ½ cup baby carrots and 2 Tbsp Asian-style dressing for dipping

Snack Time Can Still Be Fun

Rather than relying on sweet, salty, or highly processed foods to make snack time fun for kids, parents can try these strategies instead:

- Use colorful kid-themed plates, napkins, and cups to make snack time special and memorable.
- Get the kids in the kitchen and let them participate in the creation of their own snacks. This approach may even make them more likely to eat a wider variety of foods, including fresh

vegetables and fruit.

- Host a taste-test. Have the children rate their plate for aroma, texture, and flavor. Post a list of kid-approved favorites on the refrigerator for future go-to snack choices.

When approached thoughtfully, snacks can provide children with much needed nutrients and an enjoyable experience without overdoing it. The 2x2 rule mixed in with a few fun snack tactics will yield the perfect snack craze for any family.

Favorite Food

Lots of people are curious about what dietitians eat when they are "off-duty." I have discovered Greek yogurt (finally, you might say!) In particular, I have been noshing on Athenos fat free Greek yogurt. Its thick, creamy, and delicious when topped with honey.

Rich in protein, low in sodium, and a good source of calcium, this Greek yogurt can easily fit into anyone's meal plan. I love to eat it as dessert!

College Corner continued...

- **Green:** Enjoy green cabbage on St. Patrick's Day, celery and cucumbers on your spinach salad, roasted zucchini with dinner, or steamed edamame for an appetizer.
- **Blue, Indigo, and Violet:** Blueberries and blackberries make everything taste better, from cereal to whole grain waffles! Add some purple eggplant to your lasagna recipe. Figs, plums, and raisins are portable between meal noshes.

Whether you choose a different color to focus on each week or at each meal, get creative coloring you plate and your palate this March.

March 9th is National Registered Dietitian Day - don't forget to thank the RD who has made a difference in your life and diet!

