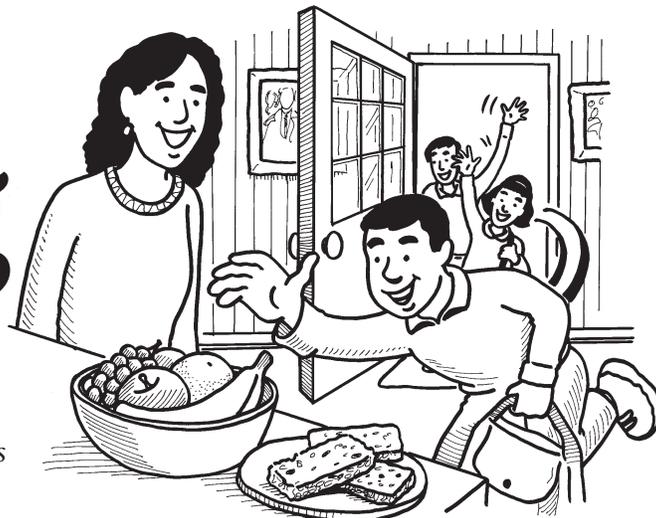


# Smart Snacking



After school, before dinner, after dinner, weekends ... it seems like kids want to snack all the time!

Here's the good news: eating the right snacks will provide the energy your children need to study and play. Use these suggestions to make snack time a healthy time at home or on the go.

## Everyday tips

Puzzled about how to come up with healthy snacks for your youngsters? Try these ideas:

- Keep a variety of fruit in the house. Go for kid favorites like bananas, apples, and oranges, but also encourage your children to sample new varieties such as mangoes, kiwi, papaya, or blackberries. *Tip:* Look for produce sales to keep costs down.

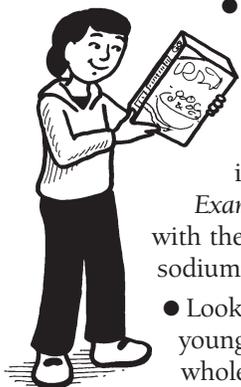
- Raw vegetables make great snacks. Offer green beans or baby carrots with a dip of low-fat ranch or french dressing.

- Together, read food labels when you're grocery shopping. Make a game of picking out nutritious snacks and drinks.

*Example:* See who can find the apple juice with the least sugar or the salsa with the lowest sodium.

- Look for healthier versions of snacks your youngsters like. For instance, get baked crackers, whole-wheat pretzels, and low-fat string cheese.

- Stay away from anything with trans fat. Many food manufacturers have eliminated this ingredient—check for “zero trans fat” on the package.



## No-bake cereal bars

Homemade bars make a perfect grab-and-go snack.

In a saucepan, heat  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup butter,  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup honey, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. cinnamon. Stir until it boils, and then boil for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Mix in  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups crushed whole-wheat cereal, 1 cup quick-cooking oats, 1 cup dried fruit bits, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sliced almonds. Press mixture into a square pan coated with nonstick spray. Cool, and cut into bars.



## Wrapped up

Almost anything can be “wrapped up” into treats for your children.

Cover a whole-grain tortilla with peanut butter, and add sliced bananas. Or spread corn tortillas with salsa, and add brown rice, canned black beans, and shredded cheddar cheese.

Either way, roll up the wrap, and slice it lengthwise into mini-pieces.



- Store healthy snacks in your pantry and refrigerator at your children's eye level. Your kids will see them first and be more apt to reach for them.

- Put together snacks that combine two major nutrients. Serving a protein and a carbohydrate together—a turkey and cheese sandwich, for instance—will fill your kids up and give them energy. Add a drink (water, fat-free milk, 100 percent juice) to keep them hydrated.

- Buy snacks like whole-grain cereal, nuts, and dried fruits in bulk to cut costs, and then package them in individual servings in zipper bags. *Note:* Check the nutrition label to find the size of one serving.

- Take along healthy snacks when you go out. You'll avoid stopping for fast food or buying junk food from snack bars or vending machines when your youngsters are hungry.

- Snack on last night's dinner. “Real food” can often be a healthy and filling snack.

- Let your children pitch in and help prepare their own snacks. Steer them toward healthier choices, and watch as they happily eat what they've made!



**At home**

Vary snacks to keep youngsters interested, and spend time as a family coming up with new creations. These suggestions will get you started:

- Make yogurt parfaits. In a clear cup, layer low-fat plain yogurt, blueberries, crushed graham crackers, and a drizzle of honey. Repeat the layers.
- Spread honey mustard on two slices of whole-wheat bread. Layer sliced apples and low-fat cheddar cheese inside. Wrap the sandwich in foil, and bake for 10 minutes at 350°.
- Use corn tortillas, pita bread, or English muffin halves to make mini-pizzas. Top with low-sodium tomato sauce, grated skim mozzarella cheese, and vegetables (sliced mushrooms, broccoli pieces). Sprinkle on oregano. Broil 3–5 minutes, until the cheese bubbles.
- Slice a cucumber in half horizontally, and hollow out the insides. Fill the cucumber cups with a “light” egg salad (mash 2 hard-boiled eggs with 1 tsp. reduced-fat mayonnaise).
- For an easy dip, drain a can of beans (kidney, cannellini), and put them in a blender or food processor with 1 tbsp. vinegar, ½ tsp. chili powder, and a pinch of cumin. Blend until smooth. Serve with baked tortilla chips.

**Carrot fries**

Bake healthy carrots into a sweet treat, and your kids will forget all about french fries!

Peel a dozen carrots, slice in half, and cut the halves into four quarters lengthwise. In a zipper bag, toss with 2 tsp. olive oil, ½ tsp. salt, and a dash of pepper. Pour into a foil-lined cookie sheet and bake at 425° for 20 minutes, until tender and browned. These carrot fries are delicious warm or at room temperature.



**Fruit surprises**



Your children will be delighted by the treat in the middle of these fruit pops.

Pour 100% juice (grape, orange, apple) into paper cups. Stand them upright in the freezer. Then, stick a strawberry or pineapple chunk on the end of an ice cream stick. When the juice cups are partially frozen, insert the sticks, burying the fruit inside the juice. When they’re completely frozen, peel off the paper cup for a surprise snack!

**On the go**

Keep these healthy snacks on hand. Your children can take them wherever they go :

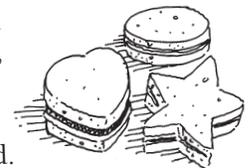
- Design your own trail mix out of cereal, unsalted nuts, raisins, sunflower seeds, dried cherries or cranberries, and a few chocolate chips.
- Buy individual cups of applesauce, fat-free pudding, or fruit packed in its own juice (mandarin oranges, peaches, fruit cocktail). Or package your own single servings in small, reusable plastic containers.
- Bake your own pita chips. Slice whole-grain pita bread into chip-size triangles. Put the pieces on a baking sheet, and brush lightly with olive oil. Bake at 350° until crisp, about 10 minutes.
- Fresh fruit is portable and always healthy. Your youngsters can take a piece of whole fruit (peach, plum, pear) on the way out the door. Or freeze a bunch of grapes for a frosty fruit treat.



**Cookie-cutter sandwiches**

Snack-size sandwiches are more fun when they’re shaped like dinosaurs, stars, or hearts.

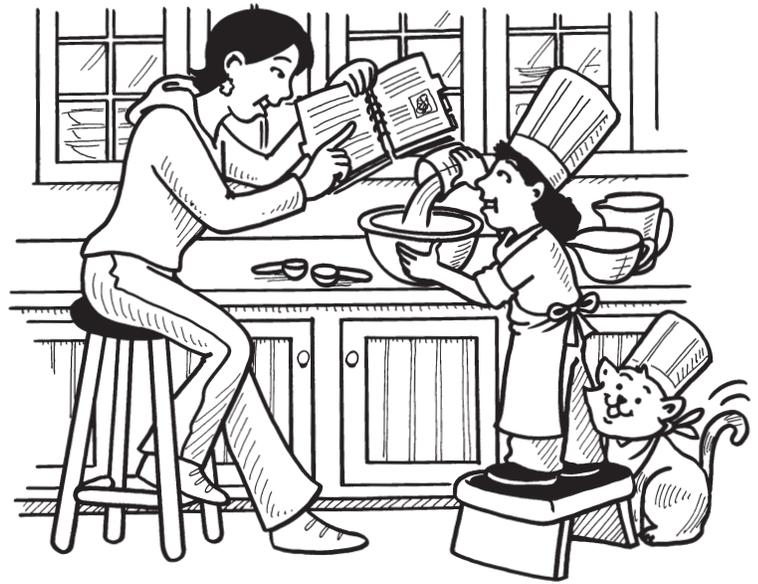
Make your youngsters’ favorite sandwiches with whole-wheat bread. *Ideas:* lean ham and a slice of low-fat cheese; tuna or chicken salad; grape jelly (reduced sugar). Then, use cookie cutters to make them into shapes (the extra pieces make good finger foods, too).



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**Nutrition Nuggets**

# Kids in the Kitchen



Step into the kitchen and prepare your youngster for a lifetime of good eating habits by helping her learn to enjoy cooking. She'll find that homemade foods are fun to prepare, can taste better than packaged foods, and are healthier. Use these tips and recipes to get started.

## Be creative

Let your child use his imagination in the kitchen. Point out healthy foods in your pantry or refrigerator (fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, low-fat dairy products). Then, encourage him to make something he likes using different combinations. For instance, he might create a sandwich with whole-wheat bread, apple slices, and



gouda cheese. Or he could toss a salad of spinach leaves, tomatoes, leftover chicken, and low-fat french dressing.

## Find recipes

Look through recipes together, and let your youngster choose one to try (see *In the Kitchen with Kids* by Barbara Hughston or <http://kids.health.org/kid/recipes>).

Discuss things to consider when deciding what to make. *Examples:* What

ingredients do we already have? What would we need at the store? How much time will the recipe take?

## Pitch in

To help your child get comfortable in the kitchen, look for jobs she can do alone or with just a little help. Use these examples as a guide:

● **Children who are 3–4 can...** tear lettuce for salads, mash soft foods with a fork or potato masher, pour liquids, stir batters, use cookie cutters, and sprinkle cheese on pizza.

● **Children who are 5–8 can...** do any of the above, plus... cut soft foods with a dinner knife, scrub vegetables and fruits, sift, crack eggs, knead dough, use a rolling pin, gather and measure ingredients, spray or grease baking dishes, spread peanut butter on a sandwich, and use the microwave with adult supervision.

● **Children who are 9–12 can...** do any of the above jobs, plus... peel carrots, open cans, peel hard-boiled eggs, and use small appliances like a blender or mixer with adult supervision. If you think your child's ready, you can teach her to cut or chop vegetables with a knife.

*Tip:* Give your youngster different jobs when you cook together. That way, she'll learn new skills and become more confident in the kitchen.

## Safety first

Prevent accidents in the kitchen and be sure your young cook is safe by teaching her basic kitchen safety rules like these:

- To keep floors from becoming slippery, clean up any spills when they happen.
- Turn pan handles in so they face away from the edge of the stove or countertop.
- Never leave cooking food unattended, even in the microwave.
- Use sharp knives only with adult supervision.
- Never turn on the stove or oven without asking an adult first.
- To stay healthy, always wash hands before preparing food or eating.

*Tip:* Post safety rules on your refrigerator as a reminder.



*continued*

## Nutrition Nuggets

**My recipe file**

Encourage your child to collect recipes he likes. He can write each one on a recipe card and store it in a small box. Or he might start his own cookbook by typing the recipes on a computer. Here are some kid-friendly recipes—with just a little help, he can make them himself.



**Fruity Yogurt**

*You'll need:* 1 tangerine, 1 can pineapple chunks (packed in their own juice), low-fat vanilla yogurt

Peel the tangerine, divide it into sections, and throw away the seeds. Put the tangerine pieces in a bowl, and stir in the pineapple chunks. Spoon yogurt on top.

**Sandwich on a Stick**

*You'll need:* deli meat, cubes of cheese (cheddar or swiss), grape tomatoes, mustard, toothpick

Fold your favorite sandwich meat into quarters. Thread the meat and cheese and a grape tomato onto a toothpick. Dip in mustard.

**Pizza Flower**

*You'll need:* a whole-grain English muffin, marinara sauce, provolone slices, olives, green pepper, mushrooms

Have a parent slice the green pepper and mushrooms. Then, use a fork to split the English muffin in half. Spoon marinara sauce on each half, and top with a slice of cheese. Decorate it like a flower by putting an olive in the center, green pepper slices for the stem, and mushrooms for the petals. Ask an adult to broil the muffin for you.

**Pocket Tacos**

*You'll need:* 2 whole-grain pitas, ½ cup salsa, lettuce, shredded cheddar cheese, low-sodium taco sauce

Cut the pitas in half, and put the salsa inside. Tear lettuce into bite-sized pieces, and divide among the pitas. Add the cheese and taco sauce. *Idea:* To make a meat taco, ask a grown-up to brown some ground beef or turkey for you.

**Banana Man**

*You'll need:* 1 banana, peanut butter, dried fruit (raisins, cherries, mango), pretzel sticks

Peel the banana. Use peanut butter to “glue” dried fruit on the banana for the eyes, nose, and mouth. Put the pretzel sticks in the sides for arms.



**Orange Slushies**

*You'll need:* 2 cups fat-free milk, 1 cup water, 1 cup ice cubes, 1 tbsp. sugar, 1 6-oz. can frozen orange juice concentrate

Put all the ingredients in a blender and, with an adult's help, blend until slushy.

**Cucumber Crunch**

*You'll need:* 1 medium cucumber, 1 large carrot, 2 tbsp. apple cider vinegar, 1 tbsp. olive oil, ½ tsp. honey

Ask a grown-up to dice the cucumber and slice the peeled carrot into thin circles. Make a dressing by stirring together the apple cider vinegar, olive oil, and honey. Mix the vegetables with the dressing.

**Cheesy Peas and Carrots**

*You'll need:* 2 tbsp. fat-free milk, ½ cup cottage cheese, ⅓ cup low-fat cream cheese, 2 tbsp. shredded mild cheddar cheese, 1 cup cooked peas, 1 cup cooked carrots, Parmesan cheese

In a blender, mix the milk, cottage cheese, cream cheese, and cheddar cheese until smooth. Pour into a bowl, and stir in the peas and carrots. Sprinkle a little Parmesan cheese on top.

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**Nutrition Nuggets**

# Less Screen Time, More Active Time

Television isn't the only thing competing with exercise for children's time and attention these days. Computers, video games, handheld devices... youngsters are easily drawn into anything with a screen.

Try these suggestions for limiting screen time and encouraging active fun for the whole family.

.....



## Less screen time

Experts recommend no more than 1–2 hours of screen time a day for children. Here are ways to help your youngster cut down.

**TV journal.** Keep a notebook by the TV. Each time your child watches a program, have her write down the title, the time, and a one-sentence summary. She'll get writing practice, and you'll have a way to track how much—and what—she's watching.

**Activity scale.** Does your youngster spend more time in front of a screen, or more time being active? Help him make a scale to find out. He can use a permanent marker to label two sandwich bags: "Screen Time" and

"Active Time." Clip the bags to opposite ends of a coat hanger, and hang it on a doorknob. For each 15 minutes he spends in front of a screen or being active, he drops a nickel in the appropriate bag. At the end of a week, have him see which bag weighs the most.



**Button jar.** Consider setting a screen-time limit (say, an hour a day). On Sunday nights, set out a jar with 14 buttons, an empty jar, and a timer. Each button is good for a half hour of TV, video game, or computer play time. Tell your child she can use 2 buttons per day. When she watches a show or plays a video or computer game, help her set the timer for 30 minutes.

When it rings, she moves a button into the screen-time jar. This system lets your youngster know when her time is up and also tracks her daily screen time.

**Limited access.** Make screen time a little less convenient, and you may find your child naturally cuts back. For example, stash the remotes. Don't put a TV in his room—bedroom TVs are linked with a higher risk of obesity. And consider cutting down on the number of sets in your house. (*Idea:* Donate an extra TV to a homeless shelter or youth center.) If you have a laptop, keep it in one location. Open it when you use it, and close it when you finish so it's not constantly in use.

**Talk time.** Have meals at the table, not in front of the TV, and turn the set off while you're eating. Also, you might make it a rule that no one brings handheld games or cell phones to the table. Instead, build family bonds by using mealtime for discussions. Ask each person to tell the best or funniest thing that happened that day. Or put a "conversation salad bowl" on the table. On slips of paper, write conversation starters such as "If I could live at any time in history, it would be \_\_\_\_\_." Here's why," or "My favorite animal is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_." Take turns picking a slip, and get the conversation rolling!



*continued*

# More active time

Kids need 60 minutes of exercise a day. Use these ideas to boost active time.

**Family sports.** Does your child like to watch sports on TV or play sports-themed video games? Suggest these games instead:

- Set up a bowling alley in your basement or outside. Try to knock down 10 water bottles with a ball.
- Head to the driving range, or play a round of miniature golf.



You can also make your own indoor or backyard course. Help your youngster make “holes” by laying empty boxes and cans on their sides. Using a broom as a golf club, gently sweep a small ball toward the holes.

- Have a race. How many ways can your child think of to cross a yard or a room? Brainstorm ideas, such as hopping, skipping, walking backward, or jumping like a frog. Then, take turns picking one of those ways to race.

**Active volunteering.** Make your active time even more worthwhile by using it to help others. Contact your local United Way, Red Cross, or place of worship to find out what you can do. You might take wheelchair-bound seniors on walks, volunteer with Special Olympics, or participate in walk-a-thons to raise money for good causes. Also, find out



how you can help sick neighbors or busy parents with babies (walk dogs, do yard work).

**Stay-fit field trips.** It’s harder to watch TV if you’re not home, so get everyone out of the house for an active family day. You might pick peaches or berries at a nearby orchard or go rock climbing at an indoor center or a sporting goods store. Play Ping-Pong, air hockey, or foosball at a community center game room.

**New ways to exercise.** At the library, have each family member check out a how-to book about a different type of physical activity (martial arts, yoga, swing dancing). Together, learn a few basics of each one. When you find something everyone enjoys, consider signing up for a class at the YMCA or through your parks and recreation department.

**After-dinner walks.** The end of the day is a “danger zone” for too much TV—it’s tempting to relax in front of the set from dinnertime until bedtime. Instead, leave the television off, and head out for a family walk. Vary the routine by mapping out different routes in your neighborhood. *Idea:* Take a “left-turn walk,” where you can only make left turns until you get back home.

**Home projects.** Keep everyone busy, and they won’t even think about turning on a screen. You might clean out a closet and use it for balls and other sports equipment. Register at [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org) for free items to add to your family’s collection (badminton set, tennis rackets). *Other ideas:* wash and wax the car, paint a room, flip your mattresses, wash all the windows in your house.

## Five-minute fitness

Try these five alternatives to TV that can be done faster than you can say “commercial break”:

1. Choose a poem from a volume of children’s poetry, and act it out.
2. Take turns calling out addition problems (2 + 3, 5 + 1). Everyone does a combination of exercises based on the equation (2 sit-ups + 3 push-ups; 5 toe touches + 1 lunge).

3. Put on upbeat music, push back the furniture, and dance.
4. Have a headstand or handstand contest. See who can stay up the longest.
5. Press down a line of packing tape on your basement floor or on the sidewalk, and pretend it’s a balance beam. Play Follow the Leader: the first person does a move, and everyone else copies it (turn, kick, jump, leap).



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