



Snack ideas for children



To encourage healthy eating, it is important to reduce overall snacking and concentrate on providing healthy family meals. However, children need energy as they grow to develop and keep them active. Young children under 5 years have small appetites and need regular meals with snacks in between. As children get older, snacks become a less important part of their overall diet. Snacks should be healthy, and high in nutrients but low in sugar, fat and salt. Children under 2 years, however, do need some full-fat foods in their diet.

Childsmile has put together some ideas to help you provide a variety of healthy, safe snacks for both you and your children to enjoy at home and at school or play.



Fresh fruit

Grapes, melon, a banana, strawberries, a tangerine, a pear, a peach, a plum, an apple.

Fresh fruit kebabs can be fun to make and eat.

Fresh vegetables

Tomatoes, celery, carrot and cucumber sticks, sliced peppers, sugar snap peas.



Top tips – Prepare pieces of fruit in advance and keep them in a plastic bag or tub in the fridge. Try a low-fat dip made with natural yoghurt or houmous.



Sandwiches

Try various fillings – cold meat, tuna, grated low-fat pasteurised cheese, egg, salad items, tomato or banana.

Top tip – Try different breads and encourage your child to help make their own sandwich. Make them in advance and store them in a plastic bag, cling film or a tub in the fridge. Why not toast a small sandwich or mini pitta bread?



Some other choices

Bread sticks, oatcakes, crackers, rice cakes, a plain or cheese scone, a crumpet, a bagel, a potato scone, a pancake, a toasted teacake.



Top tip – Try these choices with healthy spreads or dips using natural yoghurt, but try to avoid jam and chocolate spread.



Drinks

Plain water and pasteurised milk are safe choices to drink. Fully skimmed milk is not suitable for children under the age of 5 years.



Top tip – Your child may just be thirsty instead of hungry, so keep a bottle of plain tap water ready in the fridge as a cool drink.



Grab and go

- Keep a supply of carrot, celery or cucumber sticks, sugar snap peas and tomatoes.
- Fill the fruit bowl and prepare bite-sized pieces of fruit for smaller mouths.
- Peel or cut oranges, as they can be difficult and messy for young children.
- Prepare sandwiches or mini pitta bread, ready for lifting from the fridge.
- Toast and spread is great for eating on the go.



Questions and answers

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

Yes, 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.

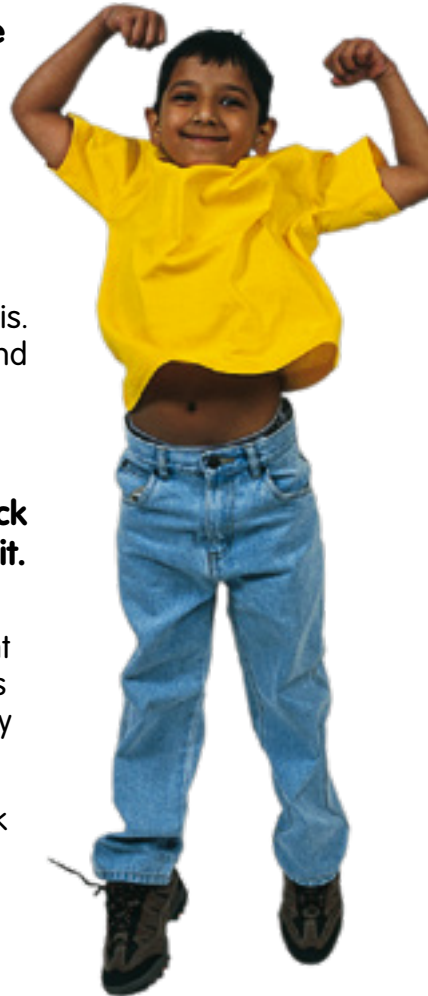
No matter how hard I try to encourage my child to eat fruit for a snack, all they want to eat is crisps and sweets. What can I do?

It can be difficult to encourage children to eat healthy snacks. If a child is involved in preparing the 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 other snacks.

My son wants to help himself to a snack and usually chooses a chocolate biscuit. What can I do?

When children are hungry they usually want something to eat straight away and biscuits are quick to deliver. Try having some healthy choices prepared in advance for the day.

Also, watching what you choose as a snack may help your child to make their own healthy choices.



What are hidden sugars?

Watch out for hidden sugars – these are best kept as part of a meal.

Hidden sugars are ingredients in food and drink and although they are not seen as 'sugar' they can still cause tooth decay.

How will I recognise these hidden sugars?

It is important to read your food labels. Some foods do not have the word 'sugar' in the ingredients list on their packaging, but still have sugar in them – it's just labelled in a different way. Hidden sugars usually end in 'ose' and the nearer the start of the list they are, the bigger the amount included. Hidden sugars include: sucrose, dextrose, maltose, fructose, lactose, glucose and honey.

Ingredients

Wheat flour, **sugar**, **apple puree** (8%), **glucose**, vegetable oil, **barley malt**

Nutrition information

Typical values	Per 100 g
Energy	1712 kJ/406 kcal
Carbohydrate	69.6 g
of which sugars	20 g
Fat	9.7 g
of which saturates	(4.0 g)

What types of food and drink contain these hidden sugars?

There are lots, but here are some examples: cereal bars, flavoured yoghurts, fruit flakes or bars, juice – including juice labelled 'no added sugar'.

Please note:

Dried fruit and fresh fruit juice can be counted as one portion each of your 5-a-day of fruit and vegetables. However, they contain hidden sugars and are best eaten at mealtimes.

Tomatoes, grapes and similar choices should be cut into four equally sized pieces to avoid the possibility of choking for younger children.



Key oral health messages

- Brush teeth and gums twice a day, in the morning and last thing at night. Use toothpaste containing at least 1,000 ppm (parts per million) of fluoride.
- Parents and carers should supervise toothbrushing until children are at least 7 years of age. From 7 years of age, many children can brush their own teeth but will still require supervision, motivation and possibly assistance.
- 'Spit, don't rinse' after brushing – this gives the toothpaste time to work to protect teeth.
- Keep food and drinks containing sugar to mealtimes only.
- Plain pasteurised milk and tap water are the safest drinks for teeth.
- Register with a dentist and visit as advised.



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