

Snacking and Your Preschooler

When you hear the word “snack,” what foods do you think of? Many people may think snacking is a bad thing. However, nutritious snacks can actually play a role in helping us maintain weight. It is important to keep the right snacks in the house and on-the-go.

Having snacks in between meals can teach our preschoolers structured times for eating, which may help them regulate how much they eat when it’s a meal or snack time. Offering a few different snack options can help them feel like they have some control over what they eat—which we know can be very important to a preschooler! Try and feed your child snacks (and meals!) without distractions like television or video games so they can focus on the food and avoid overeating.

We can get our children excited about eating healthy snacks by preparing them in a fun way. For example, you can make “ants on a log” (celery with peanut butter and raisins) or fruit cut into fun shapes like stars. Also, let them participate in making the snacks. Preschoolers can help

wash fresh fruits and vegetables, place crackers in a bowl, scoop peanut butter out of a jar, and more!

So what kind of snacks are best choices for our preschoolers? Avoid those high in salt, sugar, and fat, such as chips, candy, cookies, and other sweets. Always provide at least one cut-up fruit or vegetable, like banana slices, a mandarin orange, bell pepper slices, and cucumber slices. Like fruits and vegetables, whole grains provide fiber and other vitamins and minerals—try whole grain snacks like low-sugar, whole grain cereal, whole wheat crackers, and brown rice cakes. Lastly, include a non-fat or low-fat dairy like milk, yogurt, or cheese.

With the right snacks, we can help our preschoolers grow healthy and strong!

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