



5 tips for feeding snacks to kids

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In the book "French Kids Eat Everything" by Karen Le Billon, a mother describes the year she spent in her husband's native France trying to get her two small children in touch with the French way of life. She soon discovers the typical North American way that kids eat is so much different than in France. The French seem to have a cultural sensibility about how to get their children eating healthy delicious food from a VERY young age. Leek soup, beet salad, fresh bread and strong French cheese -no problem! This is typical kindergarten fare at the school cafeteria. She spends a year trying to get her kids accustomed to the French way of eating by exposing them to all sorts of local foods in a very matter-of-fact fashion. Le Billon's account of her time in France also demonstrates that French kids just don't snack. Period. After school they have a small "meal", sitting down at a table called le goûter. Typically it may be yogurt and fruit or bread and cheese. Then food is put away and there is no snacking until dinner, typically at 7:00 to 7:30. Easy as that!

What if kids get hungry? Well, hunger is a normal human sensation that kids get accustomed to, and it also helps them to eat more nutritious foods at mealtimes. A child who is faced with broccoli at dinner is more likely to eat it if she is not full of fishy crackers, pretzels and fruit snacks. What's so sensible about the way the French kids snack is that the "snack" is actually a limited, well balanced and satisfying mini meal. For kids doing after school activities, a satisfying and well-planned mini meal can hold them over until dinner without having to munch on "snack food" on the way home.

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Here are 5 simple French-inspired rules regarding snacking for kids. Many of these can also be applied to adults too!

1. Let hunger develop. Small children should probably be offered a mid-morning snack and a later afternoon snack. Older children and adults may only have time for one late afternoon snack. Other than that, snacks should be put away so children are more likely to eat their meals. When we let hunger develop we are more likely to try foods that are offered at meals. During these breaks from eating children can also focus on other ways of developing and growing.

2. New habits take time. Children will probably protest at first when they are getting used to a "no snacks on demand" routine. It's okay. This is a change which over time they will likely get use to if you stay consistent. Provide simple explanations for the change in your routine, and then don't give in.

3. Give balanced snacks. Snacks should consist of foods that one would give at meal. If your snack says "Snack" on the packaging, it's probably more of a treat than a healthy snack! Instead of "filler foods" like fish crackers, pretzels, chips, and fruit snacks which don't offer much nutrition, try to provide a balance of carbohydrate, protein, fiber, and fat. Providing all four of these elements will help your snack to be more filling and satisfying.

4. Plate snacks to keep portions sensible. Be mindful of portions by serving a sensible amount in a bowl or plate. This will avoid overeating which is easy to do when hungry.

5. Drink water. Avoid sweet drinks like juice, sports drinks, soda, or other sweetened beverages with snacks. Water and milk are good choices for snack time. Smoothies that combine fruit, veggies, yogurt and other nutritious ingredients can also work well as a snack.

Visit doctoryum.org for recipes and ideas for healthy snacks!



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Building a Satisfying Snack or Meal

There are 4 key parts of a complete snack or meal. Including these 4 parts makes your meal more nutritionally balanced, satisfying, and more enjoyable to eat!

Carbohydrates

1

Carbohydrates, or carbs, give us quick energy that our body can use in the short term. They are also the preferred source of energy for our brain. Carbs are found in foods like grains, potatoes, peas, corn, fruits, beans, and lentils.

Protein

2

Protein is used in the growth, repair, and maintenance of body tissues. When we are injured, our body needs more protein to heal. Protein is found in foods like meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans, lentils, nuts, and seeds.

Fiber

3

Fiber is important for healthy digestion. It adds bulk to our food and helps us have healthy bowel movements. Fiber is found in foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, and lentils.

Fat

4

Fats are important for the absorption of certain vitamins in the food we eat. Vitamin A, Vitamin D, Vitamin E, and Vitamin K all need fat to be absorbed. Omega-3 fatty acids are a type of essential fat, meaning that we must get them from the foods we eat. Fat is found in foods like oils, cheese, meat, poultry, fish, nuts, and seeds.





The 4 Key Parts:

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Carbohydrates

Rice	Beans
Bread	Lentils
Tortillas	Apples
Pasta	Bananas
Oats	Oranges
White potatoes	Pears
Sweet potatoes	Peaches
Corn	Melon
Peas	Berries

Protein

Beef	Cheese
Lamb	Beans
Pork	Lentils
Chicken	Tofu
Turkey	Tempeh
Fish	Nuts
Shellfish	Seeds
Eggs	Nut butters

Fiber

Broccoli	Cabbage
Tomatoes	Whole grains
Cucumbers	Beans
Kale	Lentils
Collards	Apples
Carrots	Bananas
Green beans	Oranges
Beets	Pears
Peppers	Peaches
Lettuce	Melon
Eggplant	Berries

Fat

Olive oil	Beef
Coconut oil	Lamb
Canola oil	Pork
Butter	Chicken
Avocado	Fish
Nuts	Shellfish
Seeds	Eggs
Nut butters	Cheese



Notice some foods fit into more than one category. For example, eggs have fat and protein.

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