



# Exploring

## children's health and wellness



farm2preschool

a tipsheet for parents and caregivers of children

## 7 Scrumptious Snacks

Children, with their high-energy needs and small stomachs, require multiple snacks and meals per day for healthy growth and development. As much as 20% of a child's energy and nutrient needs can come from snacks. Try these tips to provide a snack session that keeps children's blood levels balanced all day.

**1 Mix and match.** Providing two different food groups in a snack creates a balance of nutrients that helps to decrease cravings and level off mood swings or behavior problems. Try baby carrots with hummus, fruit with a plain or vanilla yogurt dip or even an apple with string cheese.

**2 Provide 2 -3 snacks a day.** Giving children multiple snacks keep their brain and bodies fueled for healthy development and academic performance at all ages.

**3 Limit the sugary snacks.** Snacks and juice high in sugar are not only bad for teeth but increase the risk for obesity and behavior issues. Artificial flavors and colorings, which are often found in high sugar snacks, contribute to hyperactivity. Watch for Red #40, Blue #2, Yellow #5 (Tartrazine), Yellow #6 (Sunset Yellow), and sodium benzoate in food products served to children. Serve water, low-fat milk or 100% fruit juice instead of soda, fruit drinks or punch.

**4 Add whole grains.** Whole grains do not have to be scary or expensive but do add a lot of nutrients and contain fiber which keeps us full for longer than a bag of potato chips. Serve oatmeal, partial or whole grain pastas, whole wheat pancakes, whole grain pretzels/crackers, or wheat tortillas/bread. Pancakes can be made ahead with fruit or vegetables and then cut into shapes with cookie cutters to make them more appealing to children.

**5 Kids in the kitchen.** Children are more likely to eat fruits, vegetables and whole grain foods if they are encouraged to help prepare foods and snacks. Create a restaurant activity by having one or two children take the orders and serve the snacks that other children have put together.

**6 Look at what is in reach.** Observe how your kitchen or snack area is set-up for children. Put the less nutritious foods such as potato chips, cookies, or sugary cereals out of sight. Provide easy access to ready to eat fruits and vegetables, whole grain snacks/cereals, low-fat milk or 100% juice by moving it to children's eye level in the refrigerator or cabinet. If it is at a level they can see and reach, they are more likely to make a decision to eat those foods.

**7 Label foods with fun names.** Labeling foods with fun names such as x-ray carrots or zippy zucchini on the outside of the refrigerator or cabinet so they know what is inside. Encourage children to draw fruit or vegetable super heroes or create their own fun food names based on what is in on the menu for the week.

