

Lunch at the Library's HEALTH TIP OF THE WEEK



This healthy tip of the week was adapted from "KidsHealth from Nemours," kidshealth.org/en/parents/strong-bones.html. For more tips, visit kernlibrary.org or kidshealth.org.

Smart Snacking

"Don't eat that, you'll spoil your appetite." If only you had a dollar for every time you heard that growing up. But if the right foods are offered at the right times, snacks can play an important role in managing kids' hunger and boosting nutrition. A well-timed snack can even out spikes in hunger and provide a much-needed energy boost between meals.

Snacks can keep younger children from getting so hungry that they become cranky, and they can keep older kids from overeating at larger meals. And for picky eaters of all ages, snacks can be added insurance that they're getting the necessary nutrients. This doesn't mean that giving your child a cupcake half an hour before dinner is suddenly a good idea. The best snacks are nutritious — low in sugar, fat, and salt. Fresh fruit and vegetables and foods that contain whole grains and protein are also good choices. But it's not just about what you offer as a snack — it's how much you serve and when. Pay attention to portion sizes and timing of snacks so they don't interfere with a child's appetite for the next scheduled meal. Kids who are allowed to graze all day long often have a hard time figuring out when they're truly hungry — one key to maintaining a healthy weight in childhood and later in life. A structured meal and snack schedule is one solution. You offer the meals and snacks at the same times each day, and your kids can decide what they want to eat and how much.

Here are some snacks that school-age kids might enjoy:

- low-sugar, whole-grain breakfast cereal with low-fat milk
- low-fat string cheese
- fruit smoothies made with low-fat milk or yogurt
- nuts and raisins
- whole-wheat pita slices, cut-up veggies, and hummus
- whole-grain pretzels
- fruit slices dipped in low-fat flavored yogurt



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