

## Teaching kids to choose "Smart Snacks"

Because snacking has reached an all-time high for the average child (27% of total daily calories), it's become increasingly important to provide children healthy options. If given the choice, they will choose cookies, cakes, chips and candy rather than "smart snacks," which better support their mental and physical development, and help prevent disease and obesity later in life.

Several years ago, the United States Department of Agriculture created the Smart Snacks in School guidelines to help ensure students are offered practical and flexible selections for healthier eating. The science-based guidelines were developed through feedback from parents, teachers, school foodservice professionals, and the food and beverage industry, combined with recommendations from the Institute of Medicine and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. They help ensure the healthfulness of America's youth by providing nutritious food throughout the school day. Gone are the days of sweet and salty snacks or sugary sodas in school vending machines.

### Smart Snacking Instills Healthy Habits

By consistently offering foods high in nutritional value, children will learn to make the right food choices as they grow older. Studies indicate that by teaching children to be health-conscious and choose a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, they not only gain less weight, but they also have a lower risk for heart disease, diabetes and certain types of cancers.

### Snacking is Important for Developing Brains and Bodies

Healthful meals and snacks at school provide the required nutrients for a growing body and deliver the complex carbohydrates, healthy fats and protein needed for sustained energy and focus. According to the American Dietetic Association, information comprehension and retention are greater when students' bodies are consistently fueled. Another healthy snack bonus – there's noticeable improvement of a student's mood.

### Ideas to Promote Healthy Choices

You can encourage youth to choose healthy snacks at home by:

- Posting a healthy snack list easily seen by kids.
- Purchasing only healthy snacks and beverages, such as fruits and vegetables.
- Trying something new, like protein-packed hummus or yogurt.
- Eliminating sweets as rewards and instead offering options for additional time to play or socialize.

Children need essential nutrients delivered through healthful diets of nutrient-dense foods. A little education goes a long way. Let's arm the youth of today to make healthy food choices for life.

### Smart Snacks

- Fresh vegetables
- Fresh fruit
- Apple with peanut butter
- Hummus with pretzels or fresh vegetables
- Guacamole with fresh vegetables
- Peanut butter on whole wheat toast
- String cheese and fresh fruit
- Roasted fresh vegetables

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