



## 12 Healthy Snacks Kids Will Love

By Alice Oglethorpe

While adults can get through the day without many between-meal snacks, kids can't.

Children "can't get all of the key nutrients they need with just breakfast, lunch and dinner," says Melissa Halas-Liang, RDN, a nutritionist based in Los Angeles. "That's why parents should think of snacking as a way to give their kids extra fuel for growing healthy and strong."

But just because kids need to nosh doesn't mean they can eat whatever and whenever they want. "Snacking should not be a free-for-all," Halas-Liang says. "Create a set eating schedule, like always having a mid-morning snack and after-school snack, and stick to it."

As for what to serve, store-bought treats -- like chips, cookies, and fruit snacks -- aren't a good bet. They're full of salt and added sugar, without many nutrients that kids need. "Snacks shouldn't just be empty calories; they should be used to fill in the nutrition gaps in your kid's eating," Halas-Liang says.

So what should you do? Pack in as much fiber as possible with fresh fruits and vegetables, and include low-fat dairy like Greek yogurt. This kind of snack is also a good idea if you don't want your kid to overeat in between meals. Researchers have found that children who snacked on a mix of vegetables and cheese needed much fewer calories to feel full than those who snacked on plain old potato chips.

Worried your kids won't try something out of the ordinary? Pair it with one of their favorites, Halas-Liang says. "And don't forget that presentation is key! Make healthy food look fun, and your kid will be excited to eat it."

### **Ready to make some delicious, creative, nutritious goodies? Here are 12 ideas to get you started:**

1. Take a small cookie cutter, and cut cheese and fruit into fun shapes. Place on skewers to make kabobs.
2. Make a smoothie by blending frozen mango, blueberries, raspberries, or pineapple with low-fat yogurt. Pour it into ice cube trays, put Popsicle sticks into each one, and freeze.
3. Thinly slice an apple or pear, and spread each slice with a dab of almond butter. Stack them from largest to smallest so you build a tower on the plate.
4. Frozen peas and corn may sound weird to adults, but some kids love them! Pair them with string cheese.

5. Make a milkshake with a frozen banana, milk, and peanut butter. (Use whole milk for kids ages 1 to 2 and low-fat milk for older kids.)
6. Cut carrots and apples into matchsticks, and toss them together into a little salad. Top with toasted slivered almonds or walnuts.
7. Mix a chunky salsa with some black beans and sprinkle a little cheese on top. Serve with baked blue corn chips.
8. Mix canned tuna with dried cranberries and a bit of mayonnaise and Greek yogurt. Spread on pieces of celery.
9. Serve guacamole with whole-grain chips. Make this snack even more fun when you slice the avocado and let your kids mash it.
10. Take a whole-grain pita and have your kids top it with their favorite veggies, like broccoli, peppers, and tomatoes. Sprinkle with a little cheese, bake in the oven, and serve them pizza as a snack!
11. Cut bananas into four pieces, dip them in plain yogurt, and roll in crushed whole-grain graham crackers. Serve it then or freeze it for later.
12. Slice apples and toss them with oats, cinnamon, and a little brown sugar. Bake in the oven until they're crisp, and serve with a dollop of low-fat yogurt on top.