

## After-School Snacks: Your New Tools for Teaching Kids About Nutrition

All kids look forward to going home after a day in school. Aside from being back in the comfort of their own home, all children tend to be eager about one thing as well: their after-school snack.

### The Importance of After-School Snack Times

Although kids only spend several minutes eating their snacks, it doesn't mean that they should not get anything important out of this short mealtime. Snack time also plays a key role in the daily activities and growth of children due to the following:

- **It allows them to get the additional nutrients they need.**

Kids always come home from school feeling tired and hungry. The snacks you serve your children will enable them to feel re-energized and ready to take on their homework and other activities they still have to do. If you carefully choose the snacks you serve them, you'll also be able to **boost their intake of all the vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients they need.**

- **It's the perfect opportunity for kids to discover new foods.**

If your kids ask you for a snack, most of the time, you will automatically reach for the cookie jar or make a PB&J sandwich. But snack times are the best opportunities for you to introduce new foods to your little ones. If your children are picky eaters, with some inspiration and ingenuity, you can **get them to try fruits and vegetables when you serve them as snacks.**

- **It's the perfect socialization and family bonding time.**

Whipping up snacks doesn't mean that you do all the work alone. You can get your kids to help you out with all the tasks. You can ask them to help you with peeling, slicing, and dicing fruits and vegetables. You can also give them the task of plating their snacks.

All the time you spend in the kitchen with your little ones will **allow you to ask them about their schoolwork and make other small (yet important) talk.** You also enable your kids to talk to one another and boost their interactions and relationships even more.

## Snack Times as Learning Opportunities

Since after-school snacks play the important role of helping kids get more nutrients every day, it is essential to put some thought into the foods you will give them. In addition, you can help your little ones learn more about the significance of making healthy choices during prep and actual snack times.

You can help your kids to learn more about and get proper nutrition from the snacks they eat when you:

- **Become a role model.**

Your children naturally look up to you. As such, you are their number one role model and source of the right information regarding eating right. Aside from making healthier snacks for your kids, you should show them that you love eating these treats as well. You can also **encourage them to eat healthier foods by being more enthusiastic** when your children see you eating healthily.

You can also be a better role model by finding opportunities where your **kids can see you choosing more nutritious options over unhealthy ones and discuss with them why you choose the healthier food** and leave it at that. Small, healthy messages repeated over time help children get the right message better.

- **Get your kids involved with snack prep and planning.**

Aside from learning by example, your kids will also **understand and appreciate the value of eating healthy snacks** if you get them on board with planning and prepping your snack menu for the week. Take them shopping with you and ask them what fruits and veggies they would like to eat. This is also the perfect time for you to give them ideas on what foods are better choices and which ones are not.

When preparing the week's snacks, get your kids to help you out. Give your little ones simple tasks such as slicing and peeling some fruits and vegetables. Allow them to have fun in the kitchen so that they will be excited to see the results of their hard work when you serve them as snacks.

- **Keep fruits, vegetables, and other nutritious snacks in your kitchen.**

**Stock your refrigerator and pantry with nutrient-rich foods** such as fruits, veggies, and other [child growth products](#) and limit the less nutritious ones such as cookies and sweets. Although fresh fruits and vegetables are best, keep in mind that frozen, canned, and dried ones acceptable as well.

Always keep portioned dried fruit and nuts ready to give your kids. Also, stock ready-to-eat fresh vegetables such as carrot sticks and celery sticks and cucumber slices. Don't forget to keep portable whole fruits that your kids love such as bananas, apples, oranges, and grapes.

- **Be creative with the snacks you prepare.**

Be on the lookout for [recipes for picky eaters](#) to make snack time fun. Use cookie cutters to cut sandwiches, toast, fruits, and veggies into fun shapes to get kids interested in these snacks. Whenever possible, add some color as well.

Below are some ideas you can try for fun yet simple, delicious and healthy after-school snacks:

- Pair fruits and vegetables with tasty dips such as yogurt, hummus, and avocado dip
- Blend fruits and veggies, milk or yogurt, and honey to whip up a delicious, refreshing, and filling snack
- Prepare platters or containers with various healthy ingredients and let your kids create their own pizza, sandwich, or parfait with their choice of fixings and toppings

- **Schedule a daily snack time.**

When you schedule snacks to be served at the same times every day, you give your children a sense of control and you also establish an important (and healthy) rule that snacks are available only at certain times of the day.

- **Give your kids occasional treats.**

Lastly, everyone, including kids, needs to give in to their cravings from time to time. As such, **don't make treats entirely off limits**. You can serve a handful of potato chips with a small sandwich or give them a piece of a chocolate chip cookie after eating their veggie snack.

You can also **incorporate sweets and other treats in their healthy snacks** to make sure your kids satisfy their cravings yet still eat something nutritious. For instance, instead of yogurt, you can add some vanilla ice cream to their smoothie. You can also add some chocolate chips or candies in their trail mix so that they satiate their sweet tooth.

With some creativity, after-school snacks can be healthy and tasty. Snack times will also be great opportunities for you to teach kids more about nutrition and making healthier food choices.