



NUTRITION TIPS

What Makes a Good Snack?

Children love to snack and the truth is that snacking is important for their well being. A good snack contains all the nutrients children need for growth and development. Children, because of their high energy needs, their stomach's small capacity for food and their fluctuating appetites, actually need to eat four to six times a day. The extra nutrients and calories they need can be supplied by healthy snacks. This is why you have to choose your children's snacks wisely. You should provide them with a variety of foods like milk, meat, beans, vegetables, fruits and cereals as snacks.

Importance of Snacking in Children

Children usually find it difficult to concentrate when they are hungry. Healthy snacks can help prevent the between-meal hunger and at the same time provide them with the nutrients they need for growth. Snacking on calcium-rich dairy foods like

milk and yogurt can help improve the nutritional quality of children's food and also promote their growth. As a parent, you need to teach your children how they can fit snacks into their diets, although, you will also need to help them moderate their snacking habits.

Helping Your Children Snack Well

Children that are given unrestricted access to snacks might develop nutrition problems like excess weight gain and nutrient deficiencies. Thus, you should give your children snacks at consistent times of the day, ideally one to three hours before a meal. You should also limit their intake of sugary snacks and drinks, since these can cause tooth decay. Once your children start school, the snack varieties available to them will increase.

At such times, it is wise to pack healthy snack foods for them to take to school. Also, try stocking such foods in the refrigerator so that they can snack on them when they are

back from school.

Healthy Snacking Grows Healthy Children

You can promote your children's enthusiasm for eating healthy snacks by including them in planning and shopping for their snack foods. Try limiting their snacking at home to specific locations, like the kitchen, to make it a more purposeful eating experience.

Teach them to choose foods from at least two levels of the Wholesome Living food pyramid. Both the fruit and the vegetable groups provide important nutrients like carbohydrates, minerals and vitamins. Remember, healthy snacking habits can help you grow healthy children.



* For more information on child nutrition

Visit the Olu Akinkugbe Foundation
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