

COOKING WITH KIDS

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Snacking made easy

Kids often prefer snacks to meals and/or graze throughout the day and will get majority of their calories through their snacks. As parents, it's important to choose food and food combinations to provide the most nutrients in our kids snack choices.

Below you will see tips for label reading, as well as better choices in each snack category.

Reading the label

Keep a watchful eye on is sodium, sugar, fiber, & fat (particularly saturated fats).

Sodium: 240mg or less per serving

Sugar: if natural sugar- no more than 12 grams; if refined sugar – no more than 5 grams

Fiber: 3g or more per serving

Fat: 8g or less; saturated fat: <10%

What to look for..

Fruit based:

- 100% fruit snacks, fruit leather, fruit bars, freeze dried fruit chips
- Fruit cups – in juice or water (no syrup)
- Frozen fruit – no added sugar – added to cereal, oatmeal, yogurt.
- Dried fruit – no added sugar – raisins, apricots, prunes.
- Applesauce/squeezable
- fruits – unsweetened

Dairy Based:

- Cheese sticks

Yogurt

- Watch out for “kiddie” yogurts with lots of sugar added, “junk” toppings to mix in
- Yogurt tubes are portable and easy, and can freeze to pack as a snack safely. Watch out for ADDED sugars
- Freeze regular yogurts for a “faux” ice cream treat

Smoothies:

- Make your own or buy drinkable yogurt like Kefir to avoid added sugars, syrups and food coloring
- Snack size smoothie for kids: ½ c Greek yogurt, ½ c 2% milk and ½ c favorite fresh or frozen fruit

“Snacky” snacks:

- Whole grain crackers, whole grain goldfish, high fiber tortilla chips (sun chips), popcorn, whole grain pretzels, cheese puffs (like pirate booty). These are all great choices, look at labels for higher fiber choices.
- Avoid buying pre-made cracker sandwiches, trail mixes, etc as they often have added sugars and hydrogenated oil.
- Make your own trail mix: start with high fiber cereal, dried fruit, roasted nuts or edamame and a few mini m&m’s for some sweetness
- Granola bars.... Watch out for sugar! Z bars are typically a good choice, KIND bars, Fiber One bars, Belvita, etc.



Keep Kids Fuller Longer

Overall, to keep kids fuller for longer and snack every 2 hours as opposed to every 10 minutes, try to combine higher fiber whole grains and/or fruits and veggies with a protein food, such as a dairy choice, nuts, nut butter, lean meats, edamame, or other plant based proteins.

See below for some snacks ideas that have two main ingredients that show these combinations:

- Celery + Peanut Butter + Raisins
- Pear Slices + Cheese Stick or Babybel
- Berries + Greek Yogurt
- Whole Grain Goldfish + Cheese stick
- Smoothie: with Milk and Fruit ½ Banana + Walnuts Apple Slices + Almonds Peaches + Cottage Cheese
- Carrot Sticks + Hummus Cucumber Slices + Turkey Slices + Whole Wheat Crackers Snap Peas + Yogurt Ranch (use ranch dip powder mix with plain yogurt)
- Steamed edamame + Clementine
- Roasted Chickpeas + Veggie sticks
- Bean Dip + Veggie Sticks
- High Fiber Tortilla or wrap with Peanut butter & Banana

***have a nut allergy? Choose a sunflower butter or soynut butter.



Kitchen Tasks

for different age groups

The following are suggested tasks for each age group. Of course, maturity and dexterity differ in each child. It's up to you to determine what's appropriate for your child.

2-3 year olds and up:

Most toddlers enjoy helping in the kitchen. They are very tactile and love the concept of eating their art project. This age group, however, needs very close adult supervision since their dexterity and motor skills are still developing.

- This age group can do the following tasks with minimal assistance: Squeezing lemons or limes, using a plastic juicer, washing produce in the sink, drying produce in a salad spinner; picking fresh herb leaves off stems, ripping them into small pieces; tearing up lettuce, sprinkling dried herbs and salt, using a pepper grinder, kneading dough, scooping potatoes or yams out of the skins, brushing (or "painting") oil with a pastry brush, using the rolling pin for dough or puff pastry, whisking together vinaigrettes, squeezing water out of thawed spinach, stirring, and mashing. They will need close supervision to: Grate, peel, chop vegetables and herbs with a knife, and break eggs.

4-5 year olds and up:

In this age group, there is a lot of variability in motor skills, independence, and the ability to focus, which means that some kids will continue doing the 2-3 year-old tasks, and others will feel ready to move on to the 6-7 year-old tasks.

6-7 year olds and up:

This age group usually has developed fine motor skills so they can take on more detailed work, like using measuring spoons and forming evenly sized patties. They may still need reminders to watch their fingers during grating and peeling.

- They also excel at: Dicing and mincing vegetables, grating cheese; peeling raw potatoes, ginger, mangoes and other fruits and vegetables; slicing and scooping out avocados, greasing pans, using a microplane zester, de-seeding tomatoes and roasted peppers, draining and slicing tofu, rinsing grains and beans, forming cookies and patties, pouring liquids into small containers, and garnishing (or “decorating”) dishes.

8-9 year olds and up:

There is a wide range of skills in this age group. Some 8 year olds are not mature enough to work at the stove. Others have the focus and diligence of an adult. You’ll have to decide if they should continue with the 6-7 year old tasks or if they are responsible enough to do more.

- This group can take on more sophisticated tasks such as: Using a pizza cutter and can opener, scooping batter into muffin cups, scraping down the (unplugged) electric mixer bowl and food processor bowl, putting away leftovers, pounding chicken, proofing yeast, skewering food, slicing bread, and chopping hot chili peppers (latex gloves are a good idea!).

10-12 year olds and up:

This age group can usually work independently in the kitchen. Before letting them do grown-up tasks on their own, they should have close adult supervision to assess whether they can follow basic rules such as tucking pan handles, unplugging electrical appliances, and safely using a chef’s knife. Once they pass a few of these “tests,” they can move onto basic tasks at the stove (stirring, making eggs) and oven, or using a chef’s knife, without close adult supervision. However, it is recommended that there still be an adult in the house in case of emergency.