Healthy Snacking

Snacking has become part of our lifestyle and can be part of a healthy eating pattern. The best snack choices come from the four food groups of Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating with emphasis on grain products, vegetables and fruit.

Snacks are especially important for children because their bodies need the extra energy to grow and fuel their active lifestyles. To get the most nutrition, include 2 or 3 food groups in each snack. Here are some ideas.

Grain Products
- **whole grain bread, buns, pitas, bagels or crackers**
  - plain or with your favourite topping
- **breakfast cereal**
  - plain or with milk
  - in a party mix
  - as a topping for yogurt
- **whole grain muffins**
  - bran, oatmeal, blueberry, cranberry, carrot
- **popcorn, rice cakes**

Vegetables and Fruit
- **fresh vegetables and fruit**
  - plain or with dip
  - in a salad
- **canned or frozen fruit**
- **dried fruit**
  - alone or in trail mix
- **vegetable or fruit juice**
  - plain
  - fruit juice frozen on a stick

Milk Products
- **milk**
  - skim, 1% milk, 2% milk, chocolate milk
- **Note:** Whole milk is recommended for children until 2 years of age.
- **yogurt**
  - plain or flavoured
  - topped with fresh fruit, whole grain cereal or granola
- **cheese**
  - as slices or cubes
  - with crackers, buns or bread
  - with fresh fruit
- **puddings**
  - milk-based

Meat & Alternates
- **cooked lean meat or poultry**
  - as slices or cubes
  - with crackers or vegetables
  - in a sandwich
- **eggs**
  - hard cooked or devilled
  - as egg salad on rolls or crackers
- **nuts and seeds***
  - nuts and sunflower seeds*
  - in mixtures (trail mix)*
  - peanut butter* on bread, crackers or pieces of apple

Children under 4 years of age

Children need to have their food served in a form they can handle, and that is safe.

The following foods can be safely fed to children under 4 years when served as recommended.
- peanut butter* - spread thinly
- nuts* and seeds - chopped or ground
- whole grapes or hot dogs - slice lengthwise
- raw vegetables and fruit - remove pits, chop, slice, shred, or peel and cook
- fish with bones - remove bones

Foods not recommended for children under 4 years because of risk of choking - hard candies, caramels/toffee, chewing gum, popcorn, gum drops, jelly beans, snacks with toothpicks or skewers.

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Add some variety to your snacks

The following snacks take a bit more time to prepare but are worth it because they taste great!

Thirst quenchers
- make *fruit smoothies* by blending milk or yogurt with fresh fruit
- blend fruit or fruit juice with crushed ice
- make *fruit spritzers* by mixing 100% fruit juice with soda water

Frozen treats
- make *fruit-sicles* by pouring 100% fruit juice into individual containers, adding a stick and freezing (you can also put a piece of fruit on the stick before freezing for a tasty surprise)
- make *frozen yogurt* by blending fruit with yogurt and freezing (try crushed pineapple and sliced banana - a snack your whole family will enjoy)

Hot snacks
- make *mini pizzas* by topping one half of an English muffin with tomato sauce, mushrooms, green pepper and cheese and broiling
- make *tuna melts* by spreading one half of a whole wheat dinner roll with tomato sauce and tuna, topping with grated cheese and broiling
- serve soup, chili, baked beans, leftover casserole
- offer a boiled egg and slice of toast or an omelet with leftover meat and vegetables
- make waffles or pancakes topped with applesauce, grated cheese, crushed fruit or yogurt

Vegetables
- stuff celery with peanut butter and raisins or cottage cheese and pineapple
- broil leftover cooked vegetables topped with grated cheese
- broil tomatoes or green peppers stuffed with a mixture of cottage cheese, rice or breadcrumbs and shredded vegetables, topped with grated cheese

Fruit
- stuff a cored apple with peanut butter and slice into rings
- dip banana pieces in orange juice, then roll in unsweetened coconut, crushed peanuts* or crushed cereal
- top half a cantaloupe with cottage cheese or yogurt mixed with fruit

For dipping vegetables and fruit
- blend cottage cheese or plain yogurt with chives, dill weed, chopped green onion, vanilla, fruit or orange rind

Other tasty treats
- spread peanut butter on crackers, top with a slice of banana
- mix plain yogurt with drained fruit cocktail
- build mini *snack kabobs* with cubes of ham, cheese and pineapple on a toothpick
- top a whole grain cracker with processed cheese spread mixed with crushed walnuts*