

Just for Preschoolers and their families



Snack & Mealtime Routines

Encourage snack and mealtime routines.

Most preschoolers eat three meals a day plus two or three snacks. Given the opportunity, many preschoolers would choose to snack all day long. Preschoolers who snack constantly like this might never feel hungry for a regular meal.

A regular routine of meals and snacks helps discourage eating all day, and preschoolers like it because they know what to expect. Try to time snacks a long-enough time before the next meal, so you or your child have time to get hungry again by mealtime.

Reasons to encourage scheduled snacks:

- Preschoolers who are hungry at mealtime may be more inclined to try new foods and eat the healthy foods presented.
- Preschoolers who snack frequently often choose higher calorie foods and drinks, putting them at risk for excessive weight gain.
- Preschoolers who snack often, especially on sweets, are more likely to get cavities.

On very active days, though, it's perfectly normal for kids to be extra-hungry and need to eat more than usual. On those days, be flexible if your child wants an extra snack or eats more at or around mealtime. During growth spurts, some children get very hungry. This hunger may last for several days but usually subsides as quickly as it came.

Snack time tip:

Keep an apple or baggie of carrot sticks handy! If your children want a snack, offer them a "GO" snack such as these. If they refuse, it can help determine if they are hungry or if they just wanted a "WHOA" food in response to relieving other emotions, such as boredom or sadness.



REFERENCES

M.D., M. L. (2014, November). *Hunger and your Preschooler*. Retrieved from [www.kidshealth.org: https://www.kidshealth.org/en/parents/hungry-preschooler.html?ref=search](https://www.kidshealth.org/en/parents/hungry-preschooler.html?ref=search)

