



Snack & Mealtime Routines

Encourage snack and mealtime routines

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

REASONS TO ENCOURAGE SCHEDULED SNACKS:

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

A regular routine of meals and snacks helps discourage eating all day, and helps children 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.



On very active days, 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 rises.

Snack-time tip:

Keep an apple or baggie of carrot sticks handy! If your child wants 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. To learn more about "Go and WHOA foods," click [here](#).

REFERENCES

Gavin, M. (2014, November). Hunger and your Preschooler. Retrieved from www.kidshealth.org: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/hungry-preschooler.html?ref=search>.



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