

Snacks and Nutrition

When snack time arrives, the children always benefit from a parent who has put time and energy into the preparation. Many parents worry over what they will provide. Will the children eat it? Is it nutritious? How can I find the time to prepare snack for a whole class of children?

Why Do Children Need a Snack?

Children have a high need for energy but generally, they cannot eat very much at a time. By snack time (especially in the morning classes) children are quite hungry. They consume a substantial amount of food and almost always drink a cup of water. Snack helps children to keep their energy and attention up.

What to consider when preparing a snack:

- Provide a variety of food items. Variety generally insures that even the pickiest of eaters will find something they approve of.
- Keep it simple. Children are happy to see something that they know rather than something funny or beautifully presented.
- Aim to include 3 food groups. A **protein** to provide energy and stave off hunger, a **fruit or vegetable** to increase fiber and vitamin content and a **carbohydrate** to leave the children satisfied.



Protein: This food group is very important although the most difficult and often the most neglected. Children who have allergies or dietary restrictions often have limits in this area (I.e. milk, nuts and eggs).

- Cheese and other milk products are excellent and popular. Yogurt dip for vegetables or fruit, cream cheese spread, cottage cheese and mild cheese slices are all an excellent source for protein and necessary fats.
- Nuts and nut butters are versatile, nutritious and taste great. When providing nuts, we have to be very thoughtful about presentation as they pose a serious choking hazard for young children.
- Humus, seed butters (such as pumpkin seed and sesame seed) and high protein beans/peas (soy beans) are simple and popular with the children

Carbohydrates:

- Use whole grain product whenever possible.
- Try a variety of yeast breads and quick breads, such a whole wheat, rye, oatmeal and mixed grains.
- Choose products that include dried fruit or nuts. Serve dry cereal with low sugar content.

Fruits and Vegetables:

- Cut up hard vegetables into bite sized pieces (i.e. broccoli, carrots and cauliflower).
- Uncooked green beans, green peas, turnip sticks, celery, zucchini and cucumber make a nice change of pace.
- Slice fruit or serve it whole depending on the size.
- Leave it in the fridge so that it is nice and cool by snack time. Apples, grapefruit, oranges, apricots, grapes, peaches, melons, pears, berries, nectarines, mango and pineapple work well for this. Banana should not go into the fridge.
- Dried fruits of all kinds are popular as well. Purchase those that are not coated with sugar.

The most popular snack of all time is a combination of crackers, cheese and apple pieces.

Simple is often best.