



### Snacks & the Preschool Child: Why, What & How



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- **Why?**
  - Why is snacking important?
- **What?**
  - What foods should be offered at snack time?
- **How?**
  - How can we get preschoolers to eat healthy snacks?

### Agenda



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### Learning Objectives

- At the conclusion of this module, participants will be able to:
  - State two reasons why preschoolers need between meal snacks
  - Discuss how portion size affects total caloric intake
  - List three snack items that are nutrient dense and appropriate for most healthy preschool children
  - Explain why juice should be limited to one 6-ounce serving per day
  - Describe how the USDA MyPlate can help in the planning of snacks and meals

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### Why is snacking important?

- Parents:
  - Tend to over-estimate the quality of their preschooler's diet
  - May not see the need to make changes
  - May struggle with:
    - Types of foods children need
    - How much food children need
    - How to get children to eat healthy foods



Source: Kourlaba et al., (2009). #4

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### Why is snacking important?

- Rate of growth for preschool children
  - About 4 to 5 pounds per year
  - About 2 to 3 inches per year
- Little tummies
  - Difficult to consume all the calories needed to support health, growth and play in just three meals per day

Physical Activity Age	Boys			Girls			
	Less than 30 minutes a day	30 to 60 minutes a day	More than 60 minutes a day	Physical Activity Age	Less than 30 minutes a day	30 to 60 minutes a day	More than 60 minutes a day
2	1000	1000	1000	2	1000	1000	1000
3	1200	1400	1400	3	1000	1200	1400
4	1200	1400	1600	4	1200	1400	1400
5	1200	1400	1600	5	1200	1400	1600

Source: ChooseMyPlate.gov #5

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### Eating Patterns of Preschoolers

- Milk
  - Preschoolers over the age of 24 months drink 2% milk more than any other kind of milk
- Vegetables
  - Top five vegetables consumed by children 2 - 3 years of age are: French fries, cooked green beans, cooked corn, cooked broccoli, mashed potatoes
- Fruit
  - Top five fruits consumed by children 2 - 3 years of age are: fresh apple, banana, grapes, strawberries; and canned applesauce
- Sweetened beverages
  - Top sweetened beverages consumed by children 2 - 3 years of age are: fruit-flavored drinks, carbonated beverages, sweet tea and coffee

Source: Fox et al., (2010). #6

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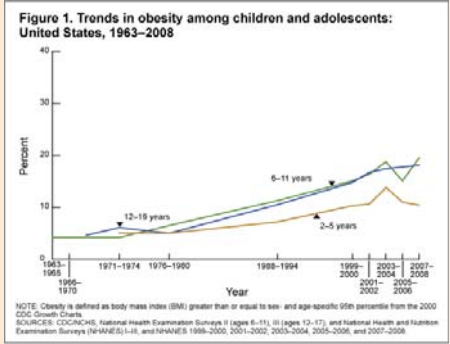
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### Why is snacking important?



Source: Ogden & Carroll, (2010).

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### Why is snacking important?

- Major changes to eating habits in general have been noted during the same period of time as the increase in the prevalence of obesity.
- Increased are:
  - Number of snacking occasions
  - Portion sizes
  - Energy density of foods
  - Caloric intakes
  - Amounts of food eaten away from home

*These changes have also been noted in the eating patterns of children.*

Source: Piernas & Popkin, (2011).

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- Do not allow children to 'graze'
- Often young children will eat throughout the day and then refuse to eat at mealtime because they are not hungry
- Avoid this by offering snacks and meals around the same time each day
- Offer 1 or 2 snacks per day
- Plan snack time midway between meals

### Number of Snacking Occasions



Source: Piernas & Popkin, (2011).

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**Portion sizes**

- Young children eat according to their appetites
- Children’s energy needs depends on
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Physical activity level
  - Growth rate
- External eating cues
- Overeating is more likely to occur when served large portions than when served smaller age-appropriate servings

Source: Looney & Raynor, (2011). •10

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**Energy Density of Foods**

- Number of calories per ounce of food
  - More calories = higher energy density
- Foods high in fat tend to have a high energy density
  - Grain based desserts are often high in calories. Foods such as cookies, cakes, pies and some crackers are high in added fat and consequently relatively high in calories
  - Whole milk is higher in fat than 1% or nonfat milk
- Foods high in water tend to have a low energy density
  - Fruits and vegetables
- The energy density of a meal is increased by the use of spreads, dressings and gravies

Source: Looney & Raynor, (2011). •11

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**Why is snacking important?  
food eaten away from home**

- 70% of calories consumed by children 2 – 6 years are eaten at home.
  - Home calorie consumption has been declining when compared to earlier surveys conducted in 1977 (85%), 1989 (79%), 1994 (75%)
- 30% of calories are consumed away from home.
  - 17% of calories is from fast food

*Parents still have control of the majority of food eaten by preschool children.*

Source: Poti & Popkin, (2011). •12

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### What foods should be offered at snack time?

- Dietary Guidelines for Americans
  - Balancing calories to manage weight
    - The number of calories that preschool children need depends on their age, gender, physical activity level and rate of growth
  - Foods and food components to reduce
    - Solid fats, added sugars and sodium
    - Foods such as:
      - Grain based desserts
      - Sweetened beverages
  - Foods and nutrients to increase
    - Increase whole grains, vegetables & fruits, seafood
    - Increase potassium, dietary fiber, calcium, vitamin D
  - Building healthy eating patterns
- Choose MyPlate

Source: Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010. 13

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### • MyPlate

- Vegetables and fruits
  - Make half your plate fruits and vegetables
- Grain
  - Make at least half of your grains whole grains
- Protein foods
  - With protein foods variety is key: seafood, poultry, meats, eggs, beans & peas, nuts and seeds
- Dairy
  - Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk

### What foods should be offered at snack time?



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### What foods should be offered at snack time?



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### What foods should be offered at snack time?

- MyPlate
  - Vegetables and fruits
    - Red pepper rings, carrots and celery sticks
    - Mandarin oranges, canned peaches, raisins
    - Limit juice to one 6 ounce cup per day
  - Grain
    - Whole grain cereal
    - Whole wheat crackers
    - Toast
  - Protein foods
    - Peanut butter
    - Hard boiled eggs
    - Tuna fish
  - Dairy
    - String cheese
    - Yogurt
    - Pudding made with low-fat milk
    - Cottage cheese
    - Low-fat or fat-free milk
    - Calcium fortified soy milk

*When planning snacks, include foods from at least two food groups*



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- Advice for parents
  - A child's appetite is the best indicator of how much, if any, food he/she should eat at snack or meal time
  - Offer snacks at regular times
  - Be patient with new foods
    - Caregivers may need to offer a new food 10 to 12 times before a child will accept it
  - Let little helpers help
  - Be a good role model

### How can we get preschoolers to eat?



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### How can we get preschoolers to eat?

- Advice for parents
  - Talk with your child's healthcare professional to determine if your child's weight is a concern
    - Offer the same foods to everyone in the family
    - Keep everyone in the family 'on the move'
    - Do not buy foods you do not want your child to eat
    - Have regular snack and meal times
    - Serve age-appropriate servings and allow for seconds
    - Praise good behavior with hugs and kisses, not food
  - Be a good role model

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### How can we get preschoolers to eat?

- Advice for parents
  - Walk the talk
    - Cook together
    - Eat together
  - Demonstrate balance
  - Show respect
    - Respect the child's appetite
    - Respect the child's stage of development
  - Guide children into making positive choices
  - Plan snacks
    - Keep it simple
    - Keep it small

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### In conclusion –

- Improving Nutrition in Preschoolers
  - Parents choose mealtimes, not children
  - Provide a wide variety of nutrient dense foods
  - Pay attention to portion size
  - Use non-fat or low-fat dairy products
  - Limit snacking during sedentary behavior or in response to boredom
  - Restrict use of sweet/sweetened beverages as snacks
  - Allow self-regulation of total calorie intake

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, (2006). • 20

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### Recommended handouts for parents of preschoolers

- Be a healthy role model for children
  - Kid-friendly veggies and fruits
  - Cut back on your kid's sweet treats
- Available at:  
<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-tips/ten-tips.html>

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## Health Resources

- Grow It, Like It, Try It [https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/growit\\_book\\_1.pdf](https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/growit_book_1.pdf)
- Eat Play Grow. <http://www.eatplaygrow.org/>
- Move to Improve <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/cdp/mti-pre-k1.pdf>

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