



For The Early Learning Centre Sector

Nutrition Fact Sheet

Tips For Healthy Snacks

Winter 2026



Healthy snacks play an important role in supporting children's growth, learning, and development. Offering nutritious snacks between meals helps provide children with steady energy and essential nutrients throughout the day. This supports children's ability to stay focused, remain active, and develop physically as they learn and grow.

Key Messages

- Healthy snacks provide children with steady energy throughout the day.
- Building snacks from the five food groups can help children get the daily nutrients they need to grow.
- Encourage water or milk as the main drinks instead of fruit juice or sugary drinks.
- Offer child-sized portions to help maintain appetite for main meals.
- Read food labels when choosing packaged snacks, especially for sugar, saturated fat, and sodium content.

Why Do Healthy Snacks Matter?

Snacks can be an important part of a child's diet, as their small stomachs may not be able to get all the energy they need from main meals alone. Healthy snacks provide extra fuel between meals and help children meet their daily nutrient requirements.

Building Healthy Snacks From The Five Food Groups

Offering a variety of snacks based on the five food groups helps children get the nutrients they need.

Fruits:

- Fresh fruit
- Dried fruit
- Canned fruit (with no added sugar)

Vegetables:

- Broccoli, spinach, carrots, pumpkin, tomato
- Legumes such as lentils, beans, chickpeas
- Potato or other starchy vegetables

Dairy:

- Yoghurt
- Milk and milk alternatives (at least 100 mg of calcium per 100mL)
- Cheese

Grains:

- Porridge
- Rice, pasta, bread, noodles
- English muffin

Meat and alternatives:

- Lean beef, chicken, pork, lamb
- Canned fish (in spring water)
- Legumes such as lentils, beans, chickpeas
- Eggs
- Tofu



Healthy Snacking Tips

- Mix and match foods from the five food groups to create balanced snacks.
- Encourage a variety of colourful snacks to make healthy snacking fun and appealing
- Establish regular snack times to help build healthy eating routines.
- Offer water or milk instead of sugary drinks.
- Full cream dairy (such as milk, yoghurt, cheese) should always be used until the age of 2 years.
- Fruit juice is not recommended as it lacks the fibre that is found in whole fruit.
- Provide snacks in moderation to maintain appetite for main meals.
- Encourage children to try new foods by offering different flavours and textures.

Snack Preparation Tips

- Choose snack portions that are appropriate for children's age and appetite.
- Prepare ahead of time to make healthy snacking easier.
- Store pre-prepared snacks in airtight containers.
- Keep healthy snacks visible and easy to access.



Mix and Match Ideas

- **Dairy + Fruit:** Yoghurt bowl with fresh berries (suitable from 6+ months depending on texture and use full fat yoghurt for under 2 years).
- **Meat alternatives + Grains:** Boiled egg on whole grain toast (suitable from 1+ years).
- **Vegetable + Legumes:** Vegetable sticks with hummus (suitable from 1+ years).
- **Dairy + Grains:** Cheese on whole grain crackers (suitable from 1+ years).

What To Look For In Packaged Snacks?

Choosing packaged snacks can be tricky, as many options are high in sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats. Knowing what to look for on labels can help to make healthier choices.

- **Energy:** aim for less than 600 kJ per serve
- **Saturated fat:** aim for less than 3g per 100g
- **Sugar:** aim for less than 15g per 100g
- **Sodium:** aim for less than 400mg per 100g
- **Dietary fibre:** aim for less than 5g per 100g

Take Home Message

- Healthy snacks help children grow, learn, play, and stay active throughout the day.
- Offering a variety of foods from the five food groups supports healthy growth and development.
- Choose healthier packaged snack options that are low in sugar, salt, and saturated fat.

For more information, please visit:

The NSW Ministry of Health - Caring for children

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/health/Publications/caring-for-children-manual.pdf>

Baker Heart & Diabetes Institute - Label Reading

<https://www.baker.edu.au/-/media/documents/fact-sheets/baker-institute-factsheet-label-reading.pdf>

