

CYS Health & Wellness

Snacking for Active Youth

At some point the parental role of the young athlete will involve snacks of some sort. As simple as this may sound, snack choices can be a challenge especially with young children. Some considerations should include allergies and sensitivity to certain foods, dietary restrictions, religious and family preferences to consuming certain foods.

Parents may have the best intentions when providing snacks and treats that are high in sugar and fat content, following evidence based practice for nutrition is the responsible way to approach healthy snack choices for young children. Programs such as youth sports teams, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, STEM, and others follow such evidenced based practices that are aimed at improving personal and social skills of youth that are linked to positive social behaviors. Our School Age, Middle School/ Teen, and Sports programs have adopted standards to incorporate healthy foods and snacks as a part of our everyday programming.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Office of Disease and Health Promotion recommends that persons over the age of two follow healthy eating patterns that include a variety of fruits and vegetables, oils, whole grains, protein foods, and fat free or low fat dairy products. The 2015-2020 dietary guideline can be found at <https://health.gov/our-work/food-nutrition/2015-2020-dietary-guidelines/guidelines/>. The consumption of fruits and vegetables have increased amongst children between the ages of 2 and 18, however there are still 1 in 10 American children ages 2 to 17 that don't consume fruits or vegetables at all on a daily basis according to *Healthypeople.gov*.



Choosing the Right Snack

Snacks can help keep your younger children from becoming "hangry" and acting out. Snacks can also help older kids manage portion size at meals. For picky eaters of all ages, snacks can ensure that they're getting the necessary nutrients needed to help the body grow. The best snacks should be between 125-150 calories, nutritious, low in sodium, sugar, and fat content. Fresh fruit, vegetables and foods that contain whole grains and protein are good choices and can be packaged for home or on the go. When making snack choices consider portion sizes and timing of snacks so they don't interfere with a child's appetite for the next meal.

Snacking well can be challenging but it is not impossible. When parents set the stage from the start and kids are old enough to make independent food choices they will typically make smart choices. When children are offered mostly nutritious choices at home and are provided good alternatives when away, more than likely they will grab a more healthy choice when they begin to feel hungry.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP), Dr. Mary L. Gavin Kidshealth.org,



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