

Snacks as Mini-Meals

Snacks are an important part of children's diets. Young children have high energy needs. Their small stomachs cannot hold enough to keep them from getting hungry between meals. Thinking about snacks as mini-meals helps in planning healthy snacks. Snacks that emphasize whole grains, fruits, and vegetables help to meet children's nutrient needs.

Meeting Meal Pattern Requirements for Snacks

Before planning meals and snacks, check the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Supplement (Snack) Meal Pattern requirements for serving sizes. Remember that the CACFP Meal Pattern for snacks requires foods from two different components. Plan snack menus that contain foods from at least two of the following groups:

- Meat or Meat Alternate
- Vegetable or Fruit or Juice
- Bread or Bread Alternate
- Milk



Serving Snacks as Mini-Meals

Consider serving smaller portions of entrée items as part of a snack.

- Bean or cheese quesadilla with salsa
- Breakfast items such as muffins or baked French toast sticks
- English muffin mini-pizza
- Lightly steamed carrot sticks and broccoli with reduced fat salad dressing
- Pasta salad
- Peanut butter sandwich half
- Pita pocket with melted cheese, hummus, or a small salad



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- Pureed black beans with toasted pita wedges
- Small bowl of soup
- Turkey sandwich half
- Yogurt parfait with berries and granola

Eating mini-meals as snacks in child care can give children positive experiences with healthy foods.

Making Snack Time Fun

Involving children in preparing their snacks can invite their interest in new foods.

Consider the following ideas:

- Make fruit and yogurt smoothies. Allow the children to help prepare the snack.
- Create a fruit and yogurt cone. Spoon lowfat yogurt into an ice cream cone. Let the children decorate their cones with small pieces of fresh fruit.
- Make a fruit salad face. Give each child a pear or peach half. Provide canned cherry halves for eyes, a thin slice of apple for a smile, and grated cheese for hair.
- Offer fruits with a yogurt dip. Let the children help choose the fruits you will serve for snack.
- Make a bean dip to serve with lightly steamed vegetables cut in manageable pieces. Let the children help mash the beans for the bean dip.



Snack time is a good time to introduce new foods. Snacks can be used as a taste test opportunity. Offer a small portion of a new food alongside a familiar food. Ask the children to tell you what they think about the new food. This is a great way to introduce a new recipe you are considering as a main dish or side.

Snack Time as Teaching Time

Consider including a book, song, or lesson related to the healthy snack foods you serve as a part of your teaching time. Talk about the importance of eating healthy snacks. Teach children how to choose healthy snack foods. Remember, giving children positive experiences with foods in child care, including snacks, is important!

Recipe to Try

Try serving this tasty Bean Dip and whole wheat pita wedges as a snack.

Bean Dip G-02¹

Canned garbanzo beans, drained	1 lb 6 oz
Lemon juice	1 ½ tsp
Granulated garlic	1 tsp
Vegetable oil	2 Tbsp
Low-sodium soy sauce	½ tsp
Ground black or white pepper	⅛ tsp
Dried parsley	2 Tbsp
Water	¼ cup



Mash or blend all ingredients, either by hand or by using a food processor. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Special Tip: Serve this dip with whole wheat pita wedges.

Number of servings: 25

Serving size: 2 Tbsp (No. 30 scoop) provides 1 Tbsp of beans or the equivalent of ¼ oz cooked lean meat.

¹USDA Recipes for Child Care. Available online at www.nfsmi.org.

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Breakfast Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
½ cup orange juice (½ cup juice) ½ whole-grain mini bagel with low fat cream cheese (1 slice bread) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk)	½ cup pineapple rings (½ cup fruit) ½ slice whole-grain toast (½ slice bread) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk)	1 Blueberry Muffin Square A-16 ¹ (1 slice bread) ½ cup blueberries (½ cup fruit) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk)	½ cup apple slices (½ cup fruit) 1 whole-grain waffle (½ slice bread) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk)	½ cup banana slices (½ cup fruit) ½ cup unsweetened whole-grain cereal variety (½ cup dry cereal) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk)

Lunch Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
½ cup Oven-Baked Parmesan Chicken D-05 ¹ (1 ½ oz cooked poultry) ¼ cup baked, peeled sweet potato (¼ cup vegetable) ¼ cup green peas (¼ cup vegetable) ½ whole wheat roll (½ slice bread) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk)	¼ cup refried beans (1 oz cooked lean meat) ¼ cup Mexicali Corn I-15 ¹ (¼ cup vegetable) ¼ cup diced peaches (¼ cup fruit) Baked tortilla wedges (½ slice bread) 2 oz lowfat fruit yogurt (2 oz yogurt) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk)	1 piece Macaroni and Cheese D-20 ¹ (1 ½ oz cheese, 1 ½ slices bread) ¼ cup steamed kale with cumin (¼ cup vegetable) ¼ cup orange sections (¼ cup fruit) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk)	1 piece Meat Loaf D-28 ¹ (2 oz cooked lean meat, ½ cup vegetables, ½ slice bread) ¼ cup mashed potatoes (¼ cup vegetables) ¼ cup steamed broccoli and carrots (¼ cup vegetables) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk)	2 pieces Chicken Nuggets D-09B ¹ (1 ½ oz cooked poultry) ¼ cup baked zucchini (¼ cup vegetable) ¼ cup grape halves (¼ cup fruit) 1 piece Corn Muffin Squares A-02A ¹ (¾ slice bread) ¾ cup milk (¾ cup milk)

Snack Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
4 Tbsp Bean Dip G-02 ¹ (2 Tbsp beans) with whole wheat pita wedges (½ slice bread) Water ²	½ whole-grain English muffin with ½ oz melted cheddar cheese (1 slice bread, ½ oz cheese) Water ²	½ cup lightly steamed carrot sticks with 1 Tbsp peanut butter ³ (½ cup vegetables, 1 Tbsp peanut butter) Water ²	1 piece cheese quesadilla with 2 Tbsp salsa (½ slice bread, 2 Tbsp cheese) Water ²	½ turkey sandwich (½ oz cooked poultry, 1 slice bread) Water ²

¹USDA Recipes for Child Care. Available online at www.nfsmi.org. Ages 3–5.

²Water is suggested as a beverage for all snacks even when other beverages are offered to encourage children to drink water.

³Sunflower butter may be substituted for peanut butter.

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Sources

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