

Snack Attack

How do busy parents juggle children's hunger pangs, while making sure they're balancing nutritional needs? Annette Lang from Expat Kitchen gives advice on selecting healthy bites for your kids

Snacks for kids don't have to be unhealthy, don't have to be boring, and they most certainly don't have to be purchased from the dull selection at the supermarket or the closest 7-11. Making sure your hungry children are snacking on nutrient-rich foods is a constant scuffle.

Feeding your children organic snacks isn't always realistic but even small changes are changes. Every change made to reduce high sugar, salt and fat snacks is heading in the right direction. Children need three good meals and at least two healthy snacks per day.

Think about the size of the snack. Snacks don't need to be too big. Give children just enough to keep going until the next meal. As a guide, choose snacks that are less than or around 600 kilojoules per serve. Snack foods like chips, pastries and sweets are usually high in saturated fat, sugar and salt resulting in high kilojoules and low in nutrients.

If cutting down on high fat, sugar and salt snacks is hard at first, then set realistic limits on how often they can be consumed. Make a place for nice things, like dessert, but only on weekends. If a child doesn't have access to the occasional treats, they are likely to gorge themselves when near junk food. So allow some limited sweet snacks,

like chocolate, candies and muesli bars, as well as salty fatty ones, like crisps as an occasional treat. Remember to make a distinction between everyday food and sometimes snack. Talk to your child about this distinction.

Promote healthy eating in your home. Children are more likely to develop healthy eating behaviours when they are provided with a choice of healthy foods in their home environment. A child will lead by example — parents who have a healthy diet and frequently engage in physical activity are much more likely to encourage the same habits in their children.

Acknowledge your child whenever they choose healthy food. Give positive feedback: "Wow, you picked an apple for morning tea! Delicious!"

Here are some quick and easy ideas to keep your child fuelled and feeling good all day! (Plan snacks approximately two hours before or after meals).

CEREAL-BASED FOODS:

- Choose wholemeal and wholegrain toast, fruit breads
- Have a batch of healthy muffins in the freezer ready to be warmed up (see recipe below)
- High-fibre breakfast cereal. Check your cereal label and be sure that it has 5 or less grams of sugar per serving
- Homemade air-popped popcorn with no added fat or salt
- Pikelets (mini pancakes) made with wholemeal flour
- Corn thins or rice cakes

VEGETABLES AND FRUIT-BASED FOODS:

- Fresh, dried fruit or stewed fruit, a bowl of homemade vegetable soup
- Raw vegetables cut into sticks and served with a low-fat dip like Greek yogurt or hummus (see recipe below)
- Small fruits such as berries and apricots are best, or cut larger fruits into pieces so your child can eat easily and quickly
- Broccoli florets – or broccoli trees. Create a veggie scene with cauliflower hedges, a zucchini moon, and celery logs
- Green apples – try different varieties... which do you like the best?
- Celery sticks – add peanut butter or cream cheese, then dot dried cranberries or rice Krispies for added fibre and flavour
- Green grapes – freeze for a delicious frozen snack
- Have carrot and cucumber sticks and chunks of watermelon pre-chopped in the fridge

DAIRY-BASED FOODS:

- Reduced-fat yoghurt
- Reduced-fat cheese cubes or slices
- Reduced-fat custard
- Hard-boiled eggs

BREAKFAST FRUIT PIZZA

Top a wholemeal tortilla or pita bread with cottage cheese or yoghurt and then add your favourite fruits

YOGHURT PARFAIT

Layer your favourite yoghurt, muesli (granola) and your favourite fresh or frozen berries in a see-through plastic cup

MILO MILK

Combine and blend 8 ice cubes, 2 cups low fat milk, 2 bananas, and 2 tbsp Milo

SMOOTHIES

Combine 1 ½ cup low-fat milk, 1 ½ cups low-fat strawberry yoghurt, 1 banana and 1 tsp vanilla extract



BERRY SHAKE

Combine and blend 8 ice cubes, 2 cups low-fat milk, 6 large strawberries and 1 cup of strawberry yoghurt

FRUIT SALSA

Cut up some of your favourite fruits into tiny pieces, toast a wholemeal muffin, dust with cinnamon

AVOCADO MASH

Find a ripe avocado, scoop out the flesh and mash with a little Greek yoghurt and a chopped hardboiled egg. Serve with veggie sticks

FRUIT AND BANANA CRUNCH MUNCH

Chop dried mango, dried figs, dried pineapple and dried banana chips and combine

CRUNCHY PAPPADUMS

Microwave some mini pappadums raised on a plate; they are a good replacement for crisps

PITA CRISPS

Cut open a wholemeal (whole wheat) pita bread and brush with a little olive oil, sprinkle with garlic salt or parmesan cheese, bake in oven 375°F (180°C) until browned and crisp

RICE KRISPIES (BUBBLE) MIX

Combine a variety of dried cranberries, dessicated coconut, dried papaya and yoghurt-coated raisins with rice (krispies)

CHEESY SKEWERS

Thread chunks of cheese and fruit such as grapes and melon on bamboo skewers

MEATY SKEWERS

Thread cherry tomatoes and chunks of ham and cheese onto bamboo skewers

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Honey and Carrot Muffins

Makes 12

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup wholemeal self-raising flour
- 1 cup plain self-raising flour
- 1/3 cup plain flour
- 1 tsp mixed spice
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 2 cups grated carrot (approx. 3 medium carrots)
- 2 tbsp honey
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil

HERE'S WHAT TO DO

1. Preheat oven to 200°C/180°C fan-forced. Line a 12-hole, muffin pan with paper cases.
2. Sift all flours, mixed spice and cinnamon into a bowl. Stir in sugar and carrot.
3. In another bowl whisk honey, eggs, buttermilk and oil together.
4. Add honey mixture to flour. Mix until just combined (do not over-mix).
5. Spoon mixture into muffin tin until three-quarters full.
6. Bake for 25 minutes or until a skewer inserted in the centre of 1 muffin comes out clean.
7. Cool in pan for 2 minutes. Turn out onto a wire rack to cool completely.



Hummus (Chickpea Dip)

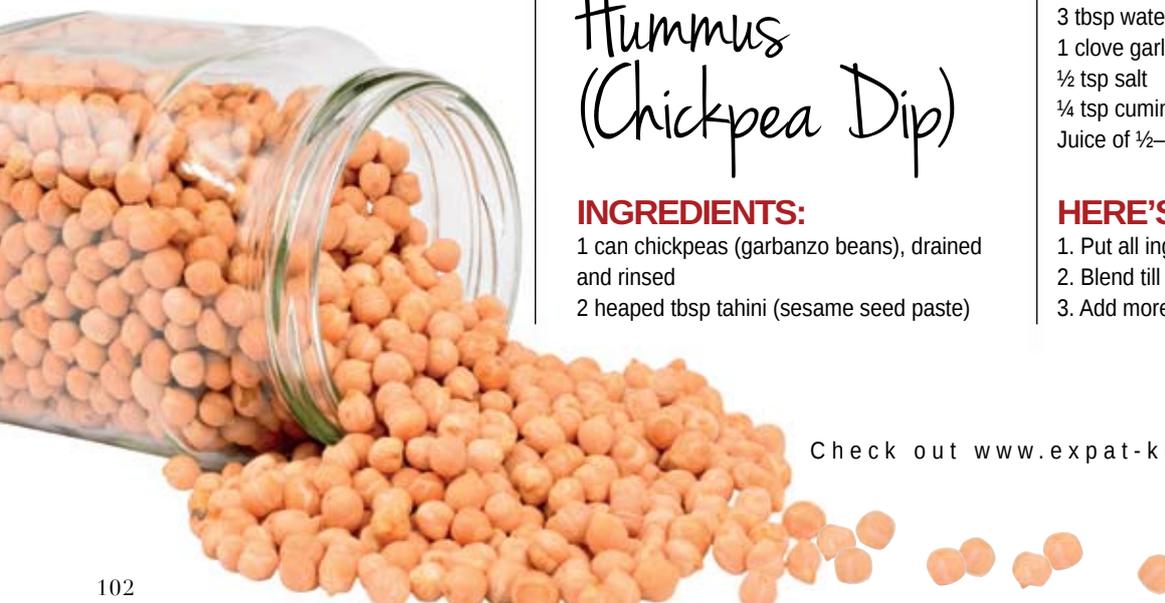
INGREDIENTS:

- 1 can chickpeas (garbanzo beans), drained and rinsed
- 2 heaped tbsp tahini (sesame seed paste)

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 3 tbsp water
- 1 clove garlic
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp cumin
- Juice of 1/2–1 lemon

HERE'S WHAT TO DO:

1. Put all ingredients in the blender.
2. Blend till smooth.
3. Add more lemon juice to taste if needed.



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