A Guide to Healthy Snacks

Children's health starts at the table



Introduction



Recipes are just the beginning.

This guide helps you decide what to offer, what to prioritize and how everyday meals can support your child's health.

The recipes are quick, easy examples to get you started.

What matters most is understanding why the ingredients work together.

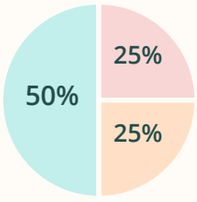
What to eat and when

BREAKFAST
Morning (e.g. 7–9 am)

- **Protein**
- **Whole** fruit
- **Whole** grains

LUNCH
Midday (e.g. 1–2 pm)

BUILD A PLATE



- Vegetables: ½ the plate
- Protein: ¼ of the plate
- Starches: ¼ of the plate

Healthy fats

SNACK
Afternoon (e.g. 4–5 pm)

- **Fruit or raw veg**
- **Protein** or fat

DINNER
Evening (e.g. 7–8 pm)

- **Vegetables**
- **Complex** carbs
- **Lean protein**

Enjoy!

Why snacks matter



Snacks can feel like a small detail.

Day after day.

How often do you make the same afternoon snack?

What you offer regularly shapes the variety of foods your child gets to eat.

There’s room for treats and for days when plans change.

A few simple combinations give you more options and fewer last-minute decisions.

Oh là là!

Healthy snacks can be filling





We sometimes worry a healthy snack won't be enough.

Families I've worked with are often surprised by what their children find filling.

Try pairing a food your child enjoys with something that makes the snack more substantial.

A pancake with fruit, for example, might suit a day when dinner is a long way off.

Your child's appetite can vary from day to day. Let them tell you when they've had enough or would like more.

Snacks to have less often



Aim for variety if snacks usually revolve around:

- Sweets and candy
- Refined flour, as in many pastries
- Dairy foods on their own, day after day
- Packaged snacks such as cookies, sweet cereal bars or chocolate-covered sandwich cookies

These can be part of a snack. Adding fruit or another food brings more variety to the plate.

Enjoy!

What makes a good snack?
Snack time!

When you're deciding what to offer, try this.

Choose from at least two of these three groups:

- **Fiber-rich foods**
- **Foods with protein or fat**
- **Starchy foods such as oats or whole-grain bread**

Pairing foods gives you a simple way to make a snack more satisfying between meals.

The HealMe approach



Vary the grains and dairy foods you offer. If your child has recurring infections, talk to their pediatrician before cutting out dairy or gluten.

Offer whole fruit more often than juice. Serve vegetables in a form your child can safely manage.

Try protein foods at breakfast and lunch, and whole grains with dinner. Adapt the timing to what works for your family.

Keep it practical. Most parents don't have hours to spend in the kitchen.

Making room for new foods



Sometimes we skip a food because we assume our children won't like it.

Then they surprise us.

They try an unfamiliar flavor or ask for something we'd never have thought to offer.

Give them room to explore and notice what they enjoy.

It helps when we're willing to try something new, too.

Children notice what we do at the table.

Sometimes that's where a new habit begins.

Healthy snack recipes





Oat pancakes

Time: 20 minutes
Serves 4





Ingredients

- 2 cups gluten-free oats
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup plant-based milk
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon

Method

1. Blend all the ingredients until smooth.
2. Heat a nonstick pan and pour in small rounds of batter.
3. Cook for 2–3 minutes per side, until golden.
4. Serve with fresh fruit.

Rainbow fruit bowls

Time: 10 minutes
Serves 4





Ingredients

- 2 bananas
- 2 kiwis
- 1 cup strawberries
- 1 mango
- 1 cup blueberries
- 1 cup plant-based yogurt

Method

1. Cut the fruit to suit your child's age.
2. Divide among four bowls.
3. Top with the yogurt and serve.

TIP: Try mixing some vegetables in with the fruit.

Homemade energy bars

Prep: 15 min, plus 2–3 hours to chill

Makes 8 servings



Ingredients

- 1 cup gluten-free oats
- ½ cup peanut or almond butter
- ½ cup honey or date paste
- ¼ cup seeds (chia, sunflower, pumpkin or a mix)

Method

1. Mix everything together in a bowl.
2. Press into a small pan lined with baking parchment.
3. Refrigerate for 2–3 hours.
4. Cut into bars.

Egg and vegetable muffins

Prep: 10 minutes, plus 20–25 minutes to bake
Makes 8 servings



Ingredients

- 6 eggs
- 1 cup chopped vegetables (spinach, broccoli, bell pepper or zucchini)
- ½ cup grated cheese or dairy-free alternative (optional)
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and mild seasonings

Method

1. Beat the eggs.
2. Add the vegetables, oil, seasonings and cheese, if using.
3. Pour into a greased muffin tin.
4. Bake at 180°C (350°F) for 20–25 minutes.

Baked lentil bites

Prep: 15 minutes, plus 20 minutes to bake

Makes 12–15 servings



Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked lentils
- ½ onion, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove (optional)
- 2 tbsp gluten-free breadcrumbs or chickpea flour
- 1 tsp ground cumin or mild paprika
- Salt and pepper
- 1 tbsp olive oil

Method

1. Mash the lentils.
2. Mix in the onion, garlic, breadcrumbs or flour, seasonings and oil.
3. Shape into small balls and place on an oiled baking sheet.
4. Bake at 180°C (350°F) for 20 minutes, turning halfway.

Coconut and berry cups

Prep: 10 min, plus chilling (see below)
Serves 4



Ingredients

- 1 can (400 ml) full-fat coconut milk, well chilled
- 1 tbsp honey or syrup (optional)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract (optional)

- 1 cup mixed berries (strawberries, blueberries or raspberries)

Method

1. Chill the can of coconut milk for at least 8 hours.
2. Open the can and scoop out only the solid coconut cream.
3. Whip the cream for 2–3 minutes.
4. Divide among 4 cups and top with berries.
5. Refrigerate for 30 minutes before serving.

Chocolate date bites

Time: 15 minutes
Makes 12 bites



Ingredients

- 1 cup pitted dates
- 1 cup walnuts or almonds
- 2 tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder

Method

1. Process the ingredients together until they form a paste.
2. Shape into small balls or bars.
3. Refrigerate before serving.

Beyond snack time

You now have a few more ideas for what to offer at snack time.

HealMe's Practical Guide to Feeding Children looks at the rest of the day, too. It helps you choose foods, put meals together and find a routine that works for your family.

Spend less time wondering what to make and feel more confident about what goes on the table.

Get the full guide (in Spanish)

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It does not replace medical or pediatric assessment, diagnosis or treatment.

Individual results vary. In an emergency, contact your local emergency services.

Do not stop or change prescribed medication, tests or treatment based on this guide.

Consult a healthcare professional before introducing supplements, herbs, fasting, dietary restrictions or other changes that could cause harm or interact with treatment.

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Any individual service involving a minor requires the participation of their legal representative.

Educational information does not replace your pediatrician's assessment or follow-up care.

Each person's situation and many other factors influence outcomes.

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A personal experience or testimonial does not show that someone else will have the same outcome or that the support provided was the sole cause.

Updated November 4, 2026 · contact@healme.care
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