

News Release

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March 27, 2005

Snacks help kids get the nutrients they need

Nutrition research supporting the 2005 *U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans* is clear. Many Americans eat more calories than they need, without getting the nutrients they need. How does this happen? It happens when we eat foods high in calories and low in nutrients. The new dietary guidelines recommend foods higher in nutrients and lower in calories.

Why are snacks important? A recent dietary survey of over 3,000 infants and toddlers found that snacks provided 25 percent of the total calories consumed by one- and two-year-olds. Typical snacks included milk, crackers, cookies, chips and fruit drinks. Research has shown a similar trend for older children and adolescents.

Like most Americans, children and adolescents are advised to eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains on a daily basis. Snacks are a great opportunity for kids -- and adults -- to get more of the nutrients they need for good health, without getting more calories than they need.

Improving snacks can help improve overall eating patterns. Here are some snack ideas for a healthier family:

- Keep fruit on the table and carrot and celery sticks visible in the refrigerator.
- Set a good example. When kids see you enjoy fruits, vegetables and whole grains, they will too.
- For snacks on the go, try apples, raisins, grapes, carrots, sliced vegetables and dip made with low-fat yogurt.
- Try whole wheat bread with peanut butter, whole grain crackers with cheese, or whole grain popcorn or cereal mixed with nuts or raisins.
- Keep less chips, candy, cookies and soda around. Instead, provide healthier convenience foods like berries, yogurt, bananas, carrots, broccoli or graham crackers.
- Are healthy snacks available at school? Let your school administration, Parent Teacher Organization, or school board know you will help develop or revise their nutrition policies.

Prioritizing your family's health can be a challenge. Being aware of what your family is snacking on is an important step toward improved nutritional health.

For more information, contact our office or go online to:

- Finding Your Way to a Healthier You: <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/pdf/brochure.pdf>.
- Why Snacks?: http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/Nibbles/why_snacks.pdf.

- Using the Nutrition Facts Label: <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/lab-gen.html>.

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