



UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA

Agriculture & Natural Resources



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION • PLACER & NEVADA COUNTIES

PLACER: 11477 E Avenue • Auburn, CA 95603

Tel: (530) 889-7385

Fax: (530) 889-7397

E-Mail: ceplacer@ucdavis.edu

NEVADA: 255 So. Auburn Street • Grass Valley, CA 95945

Tel: (530) 273-4563

Fax: (530) 273-4769

E-Mail: cenevada@ucdavis.edu

WEB SITE: ceplacervevada.ucdavis.edu

NEWS RELEASE

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For Further Information Call:
Vicky Pantels (530) 889-7350

To Graze or Not To Graze

You probably hear “I’m hungry,” every few minutes (or so it seems) from your young children each day. Do you offer them a snack? Do you let them “graze” on food throughout the day? What’s a busy parent to do?

Young children have small tummies and need snacks. Sometimes, three meals a day is just not enough! Children usually need to eat 3 meals each day along with 2 to 3 snacks between these meals. Snacks can help children meet their daily nutrient requirements. However, many snacks that are provided to children tend to be those that are high in fat and sugar and are low in nutrients, which can lead to weight gain. The best snack is one that is planned and nutritious.

When planning a snack, choose fruits, vegetables, and whole grain foods. Yogurt and other dairy products also serve as great snacks and provide calcium and protein to your children’s diet. Try to offer one snack between breakfast and lunch, one snack between lunch and dinner and one snack before bedtime. Be sure to watch the timing of snacks and keep at least 2 hours between meals and snacks.

Try these simple snacks and let your children help prepare them:

- Spread peanut butter on a tortilla. Top with banana slices. Roll up and eat.
- Spread cream cheese and strawberry jam on crackers.
- Layer cheese slices and turkey or ham slices on crackers.
- Top yogurt with fruit (strawberries, blueberries, chopped peaches) and granola.
- Serve string cheese or cheese curds with crackers.
- Blend frozen berries, yogurt and 100% fruit juice in a blender for a cool treat.
- Cucumber, jicama, carrot or zucchini slices.

Remember to avoid choosing high sugar and high fat foods such as chips, cookies, candy, soda and fruit drinks even for “on-the-go” snacks. Fruits, vegetables, whole-wheat crackers, and yogurt cups travel well and are also easy to pack. So go, ahead and let your children snack!

Parents and child care providers can learn more about healthy snacks and nutrition for young children through the University of California Cooperative Extension’s Nutrition BEST program at (530) 889-7350 or visit us at <http://ceplacer.ucdavis.edu>.

Sharon K. Junge
County Director

University of California, United States Department of Agriculture, and Placer and Nevada Counties Cooperating