Set an example with your own eating habits.
Let your children see you enjoying the same healthy snacks you give to them.

By learning to eat and enjoy snacks that are healthy now, your child will develop healthy eating habits that will serve her well in the future!

When you have a question, call or visit your local office of The University of Georgia's Cooperative Extension Service.

You'll find a friendly, well-trained staff ready to help you with information, advice, and free publications covering agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, 4-H and youth development.

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The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and counties of the state cooperating.

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ORGANIZATION COMMITTED TO A DIVERSE WORK FORCE

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Gale A. Buchanan, Dean & Director

The University of Georgia
Cooperative Extension Service
College of Family and Consumer Sciences
and College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences cooperating
Snacking is a way of life for most Americans and can be good for children. Eating regular meals at breakfast, lunch, and dinner may not provide enough food for children’s energy needs. Why?

Children are growing fast. They usually are more active than adults. They may need more calories than they can eat at one meal to last them until the next meal. Besides extra calories, children may not get all the nutrients they need from regular meals.

Snack time is also a time for social interaction when children can learn to enjoy new foods.

Children (and adults) should be encouraged to think about nutrition when choosing snacks. More than ever, children are raiding the refrigerator and cabinets to fix their own snacks and end up eating “empty-calorie” foods that are high in fat and sugar but low in protein, vitamins, and minerals.

What is a nutritious snack?

A nutritious snack provides a food from at least one of the food groups of the Food Guide Pyramid, and at the same time isn’t too high in fat, sugar, or salt.

What can you do?

Make healthy snacks available.

What can you keep on hand to help children get the nutrition they need when their snack attacks occur?

- Fresh and dried fruits, canned and frozen juices, raw vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, carrot sticks, celery) and dips made from low-fat yogurt and cheese.
- Popcorn, whole-wheat breads and rolls for sandwiches, graham crackers, vanilla wafers and unsweetened breakfast cereals.
- Peanut butter, low-fat lunch meats, tuna for spreads, and leftovers like lean beef, turkey, chicken, soups and casseroles.
- Low-fat milk, fruit yogurt, and cheese.
- Homemade cookies or “sweets” using low fat ingredients. For example, if you make oatmeal cookies, you can reduce the fat by 1/3 by using applesauce instead of shortening.
- Discourage snacking in front of the TV. Encourage children to sit at a table when they eat. There will be less chance of choking and they will be more aware of what they are eating. Also, there will be fewer spills to clean up.

Teach your child to become a selective snacker.

Have snacks on hand from the lower part of the Food Guide Pyramid. Keep them in easy view and reach of family members.

Involve children in planning, shopping for and preparing delicious snacks. Include nutritious snacks in daily meal plans. Use snacks as a mini-meal if schedules are tight or if the child is a fussy eater.

To avoid spoiling mealtime appetites, encourage children not to snack within an hour before meals. Satisfy cravings for sweet food by keeping fresh fruits on hand. Limit candy, soda, and similar foods.

If your children are fixing foods by themselves, make sure to teach them about safe food handling. Washing hands with soap is a must. Teach them to store perishable food properly in the refrigerator and to reheat leftovers thoroughly.

If you allow them to use the stove or the microwave, make sure they know how to use it safely and correctly. Many appliances can be dangerous if used improperly.