

## Summer Snacks for Your Children

Healthy snacks and foods are very important for all children to help with growth, brain development, and the prevention of acute and chronic diseases. The Surgeon general has issued warnings that this generation may have a shorter, less healthy lifespan than their parents. Fortunately, healthy food and exercise have the ability to prevent and change this prediction.

Just as play is the basis for exercise in children, whole foods should be the basis of diet for children. By focusing on a whole foods diet, your child will have the nutrients they need to build a healthy immune system, grow strong, focus, learn and improve their behavior at home and school.



Whole foods include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts, seeds, eggs, meat, and clean fish. They are the foods that are not found in a box or with a “food label.” If the food does come in a package, be sure to read the label for the ingredients. Choose packaged foods with a limited number of ingredients, no added sugar and without words that are unrecognizable. Food additives, dyes and artificial sweeteners may cause asthma, allergies and poor behavior in children. Be aware of how your children act after different meals and snacks.

The best way to teach a child to like whole foods is to incorporate them into your diet before you begin your family. The openness to tastes begins in the uterus through the variety of flavors the mother eats. The first flavors a baby enjoys are the ones a mother eats during and after her pregnancy.

It is never too late to start using whole foods in your meals and snacks for your children or yourself. If whole foods have not been a part of your family’s lifestyle that is ok. Start today.

1. **Begin by getting excited about whole foods. Children pick up this excitement and will express it back. Remind yourself that food is fun. Life for your children is all about discovering their world and food is a part of this experience.**
2. **Breast milk is sweet. All other flavors must be learned. It takes up to 50 exposures to a food before a child will like a new flavor. This means persistence is very important. Continue to introduce foods even if your child has not liked them in the past. They will surprise you.**
3. **Increase the types and amounts of vegetables, fruits and whole grains served in your home. It is important to include all of your children’s favorites as well as new foods.**

4. Whenever possible, buy organic. Because your children are actively growing and have a higher metabolic rate, they are more susceptible to the growing number of toxins, pesticides and chemicals in our food and environment.

This summer, try watermelon balls mixed with melon balls of different colors, celery cars with carrot wheels, almond butter and organic raisin people. Or freeze organic grapes for a yummy frozen treat. Peas and many fruits are good frozen also. See our website for more ideas.



<http://www.unc.edu/~melaffer/Pathfinder/vegetables.jpg>