

# SMART SNACKS

## FOR HUNGRY KIDS!

By Julia Aitken



### Kids and snacking go hand in hand, so reach for these healthy choices, which are also kid-approved

**Y**ears ago, letting children eat between meals was frowned upon, but now we've learned that kids need to snack. Cathy Pearson, a registered dietitian in Richmond Hill, Ont., who is also an in-house dietitian for Longo Brothers Fruit Markets Inc., recommends that most children eat every three to four hours, to get the energy and nutrients they require. And it's important they eat right. "Snacks shouldn't be high in salt, fat, sugar and caffeine; they should be nutrient dense and contain at least two different food groups," she says.

So, what should our kids be snacking on? "The best snacks are foods that aren't sticky and that clear quickly from the mouth," says Dr. Harry Höediono, a Past-President of the Ontario Dental Association (ODA) and a dentist in Kitchener, Ont. (With the help of his wife and business partner, Dr. Helen DeMan, Dr. Höediono has raised three children. He knows what hungry kids like!)

#### Brushing on the go

Even if you send your kids to school with a lunch box brimming with tooth-friendly snacks, they'll still need to clean their teeth after eating. The best solution, says Dr. Höediono, is to pack a toothbrush and fluoridated toothpaste, too, and encourage your children to make brushing part of their lunch ritual.

If your child's forgotten his toothbrush, Dr. Höediono says to get them to rinse their mouth vigorously a couple of times, preferably with community-fluoridated water from the tap.

#### A word about vitamin D

Sunlight provides vitamin D, but our northern climate means that we may not get enough of it during the winter. The best food source is fortified milk, but other



foods (margarine, eggs, chicken livers and oily fish) contain small amounts. Most pediatric multivitamins contain sufficient vitamin D for your child's needs, but always check with your pediatrician.

### Kids and calcium

A well-balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D is critical for healthy bones and teeth. Your first choice should be white milk and milk products fortified with vitamin D, says Pearson, adding, "These don't have to be the lower-fat kind, unless your child is close to the end of linear growth. Kids need the extra fat for energy and development."

If your child is lactose-intolerant, check out these sources of calcium:

- lactose-free or lactose-reduced milk and dairy products
- cheese, such as Swiss, Edam, Gouda and cheddar, since they contain very little lactose
- yogurt or kefir with a lower sugar content
- soy beverages fortified with calcium
- canned sardines and salmon with bones
- tofu prepared with calcium sulfate.

### Candy: The hard truth

It's a sad fact that most kids have a sweet tooth. Dr. Höediono suggests instilling good eating habits in your children early on by offering fresh fruit or fruit yogurt for dessert, instead of sugary treats.

But candy's not going away, so we asked Dr. Höediono to nominate the least harmful candy (and the most) in the store. (Please see the sidebar to the right.) He advises rationing the least-harmful candy to very small amounts at mealtimes. 

### The Good Guys

We asked Cathy Pearson, registered dietitian, and dentist Dr. Harry Höediono to share with us how to fill a lunch box with good-for-you, tooth-friendly snacks.

Their suggestions are:

- whole-grain sandwiches with savoury fillings
- whole-grain bread sticks
- cheese
- fresh fruit, especially high-fibre fruits such as oranges or unpeeled apples
- raw vegetable sticks with hummus or other dips
- kefir or drinkable yogurt with a lower sugar content
- small carton of white milk.

### The Bad Guys

Some snacks should be given a permanent time out. Here's Dr. Höediono's list of what not to put in your child's lunch box:

- cereal/marshmallow squares
- candy apples
- soft drinks and fruit juices
- sugar cubes (yes, says Dr. Höediono, some parents pack a couple with lunch!)
- fruit roll-ups
- chocolate bars, especially those containing caramel
- doughnuts and pastries.

#### LEAST-HARMFUL CANDY:

A small amount of dark chocolate.

#### WORST CANDY:

Any sweet that is:

- sticky
- bathes the teeth in sugar
- stays in the mouth for a long time.