



Snacks for Young Children

Lexington-Fayette County Health Department

Toddlers (ages 12 – 24 months) and preschoolers (ages 2 – 5 yrs) have special needs when it comes to the foods they eat. Keep the following tips in mind when preparing snacks for children in this age group.

Choking

Choking is a serious concern for young children. Their mouths are small, they may not have all the teeth needed to properly chew the food, and children often put large handfuls of food into their mouths at one time while eating fast. To help prevent choking, follow these guidelines:

- Sit with your child and eat together so that you can monitor how much he puts in his mouth. This is also a good time to teach your child to sit (still) at the table while eating and to not eat while watching TV – as this may distract them from chewing their food or “mindless eating” (eating when not hungry).
- You may also want to avoid giving your child sticky foods such as peanut butter until he is older, as these can cause choking.
- Foods that crumble (like crackers) can also cause choking. Watch your child closely and start by giving “baby crackers” or “puffs” that are small and will easily dissolve. As your child’s chewing and swallowing improves (usually by preschool age) you can add regular crackers to his diet.

Cut foods up so that they are no bigger than the last section of the child’s thumb.



Kid-Tested Snack Ideas:

These snacks are favorites of toddlers and preschoolers and are safe & healthy.

- Graham crackers and milk (whole milk from age one to two, then use 1% or skim).
- Animal crackers
- Cheese fish-shaped crackers
- Flavored yogurt
- Cooked twirl pasta or macaroni
- Low-sugar breakfast cereals (like Cheerios)
- Fresh fruit (skinned and cut into “tip-of-thumb-size” pieces)
- Shredded cheese
- All-fruit popsicles

Snacks to Avoid:

There are some foods that are not safe for young children. You may want to avoid these foods until your child is older.

- Whole Grapes
- Raisins
- Popcorn
- Nuts
- Hard Candies
- Hot Dogs
- Raw Veggies or Hard Fruits
- Honey
- Peanut Butter (due to allergy risk)
- **Foods with “empty calories” or those high in sugar and/or fat and have no “good for you nutrients” like vitamins & minerals.**



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