

FOOD MATTERS

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HEALTHY SNACK FOODS FOR KIDS

While our genes predispose us to liking sweet and salty foods, new research confirms food preferences are actually learned. And Mum and Dad set the best example. Importantly, you can modify your child's preferences with healthy food and eating experiences.

Parents' Eating Preferences

Many children (as do their parents) have a fear of new foods, called "neophobia." This fear can be reduced by providing information that new foods taste good, and by giving repeated opportunities for sampling. Don't give up if they reject new foods after only a few attempts!

Choice of snack foods is particularly important, since these make up a significant proportion of many children's diets.

Best Snack Food Ideas

Fruit. Offer at least two pieces per day. Nutrition surveys repeatedly show that many kids just don't eat enough fruit.

Bread. Introduce smooth, wholemeal slices, crumpets or

muffins. Inadequate dietary fibre intake is the usual cause of constipation in children.

Cereals and cereal bars. Choose those made from wholegrains and those not too high in sugar, such as Weet-Bix®. Insert a Fruity-Bix® Bar into your child's lunch box instead of a pack of chips.

Milk/soy drinks and yoghurts.

Make them into a smoothie with fruit, or offer them plain. Use fat-reduced varieties if you are using dairy, since hardening of the arteries has been shown to occur as early as two years.

For Parties

Foods, such as packet snacks, soft drinks, cordials, lollies and chocolates should be offered only occasionally. They're not advisable for everyday consumption. Remember, what you eat and feed your child now could set their eating habits for life. Even more significant is the evidence that diet in early life can determine risk of certain diseases later in life.

See *page 18* for some healthy, fun recipes for kids.