

# Chow Line

News from the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences

## Healthy eating: The gift that keeps on giving

**My grandchildren are coming for an extended visit over the holidays. I've been concerned about some of their eating habits, but as their grandma, I don't want to make a big deal about it. What are some subtle things I can do while they're here to encourage them to eat a little better?**

What a great grandma! You deserve kudos for noticing potentially damaging eating habits developing in your grandchildren and caring enough to nudge them in a healthier direction.

Here are some ideas to try from youth nutrition specialists with Ohio State University Extension:

- Adopt a "water first for thirst" policy. When the grandkids ask for something to drink, pour a nice big glass of ice water for them instead of high-sugar soft drinks or other beverages. Experts generally recommend children 4-8 years old drink 4 cups of water a day (without added sweeteners), and that increases to 7-8 cups for ages 9-13, and 8-11 cups for ages 14-18. For teens, that translates into drinking enough water to fill a 2-liter bottle. Lowfat (unflavored) milk also is a nutritious option. However, limit 100 percent fruit juice to less than 8 ounces a day, and avoid sweetened drinks altogether. Consider dressing up water by adding strawberry and orange slices or cucumber slices and mint.
- Start a tradition of making healthful smoothies for breakfast or an afternoon snack. Just pack the blender full of fruit, such as bananas, strawberries, pineapple, peaches or mandarin oranges, plus ice cubes, yogurt and juice. You could even add fresh spinach for green smoothies. No need for extra sugar or ice cream. For thicker smoothies, try using frozen fruit.



image: Hemera

- Speaking of fruits and vegetables, keep a good variety on hand and make it as easy as possible for your grandchildren to eat. Depending on how old your grandchildren are, try slicing fruits and vegetables into bite-size pieces. In one study, younger elementary-school students said they found whole fruit to be too cumbersome to eat comfortably, and started eating much more of it when fruit was sliced for them. For preschoolers, be sure to cut grapes and cherry tomatoes in half before serving to be sure they aren't a choking hazard.
- While you're at it, double up on vegetables both for snacks and during meals — most children don't eat nearly enough. For snacks, consider having a large clear bowl in the fridge with ready-to-eat baby carrots, celery sticks, bell pepper strips, cucumber slices, and broccoli and cauliflower florets.
- Other healthful snacks to consider keeping around include nuts, whole-grain crackers, rice cakes and air-popped popcorn.
- Pay special attention when you're eating out, when it's very easy to overconsume empty calories. Try to steer them away from fried and breaded foods, even fried fish, chicken and vegetables. If french fries or potato chips come with a meal, ask if it's possible to substitute a salad, fruit or soup.

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**Editor:** This column was reviewed by Carol Smathers, field specialist in Youth Nutrition and Wellness for Ohio State University Extension.

This column is being distributed earlier in the week than usual in anticipation of the Thanksgiving holiday.

*Chow Line* is a service of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to *Chow Line*, c/o Martha Filipic, 364 W. Lane Ave., Suite B120, Columbus, OH 43201, or [filipic.3@osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@osu.edu).

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