

# Chow Line

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

## Pack kids' snacks with nutrients, variety

**I know my kids eat too many cookies and chips. What are some healthier snack options for kids?**

Thirty years ago, children ate, on average, one snack a day. Today, they average three snacks a day, and some experts point to that increase as being at least partly responsible for the rise in childhood obesity rates over the years. Cutting back on snacking could be a good idea for both children and adults alike.

But eliminating children's snacking altogether can be an impossible task for parents. Your idea to emphasize healthful snacks is a good one. And it could have huge nutritional payoffs.

As you think about what might be satisfactory replacements (in your children's eyes) for chips and baked goods, you might consider providing options — sort of a combo plate. That's a recommendation from a study published in 2013 that examined children's snacking.

The study involved 201 children in third through sixth grades. The kids were brought into the study's setting in small groups and watched about 45 minutes of television while being encouraged to snack as much as they wished.

Some groups were given potato chips and cheese curls. Others got raw vegetables and a variety of cheeses. Still others were given just vegetables or just cheese. Cheese and vegetables were chosen in part because they are nutrient-dense — important sources of calcium, protein, vitamins and fiber. Plenty of food was available. The children were asked how full they felt when they arrived, in the middle of the study period, and at the end.

The children who were given chips ate nearly 300 calories worth of snacks before they said they felt full, and consumed more than 600 calories



image: iStock

during the 45-minute study period. Children given only vegetables ate the fewest calories, about 50, and children given only cheese ate an average of 200 calories. But those given the combination of cheese and vegetables ate an average of about 175 calories, and said they felt full at about 50 calories. In addition, those children ate just as many vegetables as the children who were provided only vegetables. The researchers concluded that providing an assortment of nutrient-dense snack foods such as cheese and vegetables not only offer many more nutrients than chips, but help children feel full on many fewer calories. Depending on their age, children require only 1,000-2,000 calories per day, so it's important to make sure their snacks are not too high in calories and are packed with nutrients. To find the recommended calorie level for your child, see [go.osu.edu/kidcals](http://go.osu.edu/kidcals).

For other healthy snack ideas, see "MyPlate Snack Tips for Parents" online at [go.osu.edu/snacktips](http://go.osu.edu/snacktips). They include:

- Have a variety of fruit on hand, including fresh, frozen, dried or canned fruit.
- Include whole grains as snacks, including popcorn, whole-wheat bread and whole-oat cereals that are low in added sugar.
- Provide high-protein items for snacking, including low-sodium deli meats, unsalted nuts or hard-boiled eggs.

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**Editor:** This column was reviewed by Carol Smathers, Youth Nutrition and Wellness specialist with Ohio State University Extension. OSU Extension is the outreach arm of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences at The Ohio State University.

*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, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1043, or [filipic.3@osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@osu.edu).*

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