

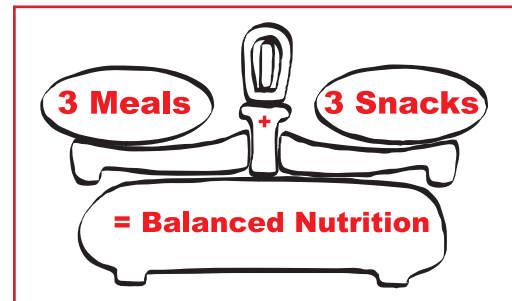
# CARE Connection

## Meal Patterns Grab and Go Lesson

### Young Children Need Snacks for Balanced Nutrition

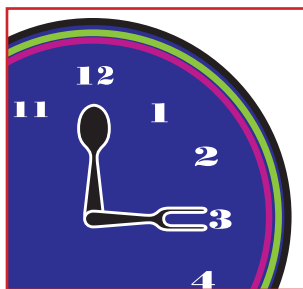
Nutrition experts tell us that most young children need three meals and three snacks each day. Snacks play an important role in childhood nutrition for the following reasons.

- Children's stomachs are small. They often cannot eat enough food in three meals a day to meet their nutritional needs.
- Snacks help provide the nutrients and energy needed for good health and growth.
- Snacks keep children from becoming too hungry between meals.
- Snacks need to be based on healthful foods most of the time, just like meals.
- Snacks provide a great time to offer new foods to children.



The hours that children are in your care will determine

- the time of day snacks are served, and
- the number of times snacks are served each day.



Plan snack times to ensure that children are ready to eat. Allow at least 2 hours between meals and snacks.

For example, if the children eat breakfast at 8:00 a.m. and lunch is served at 11:30 a.m., there is not enough time for a mid-morning snack. An afternoon snack is a good idea. When planning afternoon snacks, think about the time that

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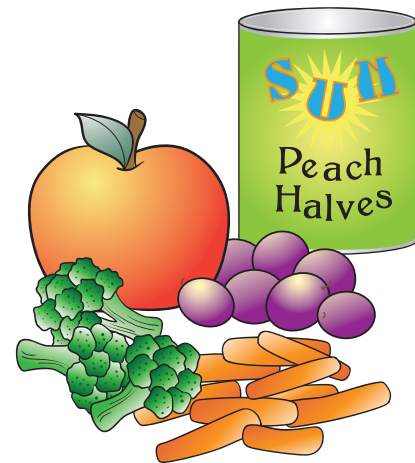
### Young Children Need Snacks for Balanced Nutrition

most children will eat supper at home. Serve afternoon snacks a little later in the day so that children will not be hungry too early in the evening as their families prepare meals after work.

#### CACFP Snack Meal Patterns and Serving Sizes Per Age Group

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Supplement (Snack) Meal Pattern requires that at least two different components be served for a reimbursable snack. The two components are chosen from: Milk, Fruits/Vegetables, Grains/Bread, and Meat/Meat Alternates.

Serving sizes for snacks are set for each age group. The serving sizes vary slightly from the meal serving sizes; children 1 to 5 years old are served similar portions at snack.



*Children 1 to 5 years old are served similar portions at snack.*

The CACFP Meal Patterns for Snacks chart that follows shows the minimum quantities needed for snacks for each age group. Check with your sponsor or state agency for the most up-to-date information on meal patterns.

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CACFP Child Meal Pattern for Snacks				
Component Groups				
	Fluid Milk	Grains/Bread	Fruits/ Vegetables	Meat/Meat Alternates
Choose two of the four component groups.	Serve whole milk to children 1–2 yrs; switch to lower fat milk after age 2. Do not serve milk with juice.	Grains/Bread served must be whole-grain or enriched grain products at all meals and snacks.	Juice cannot be served with milk for a snack. Serve fruit more often. Juices must be 100%.	Seeds and nuts can provide all of a meat/meat alternate serving in a snack.

Serving Sizes per age range				
1–2 years old	½ cup whole milk	½ slice <sup>1</sup>	½ cup	½ ounce <sup>2</sup>
3–5 years old	½ cup	½ slice <sup>1</sup>	½ cup	½ ounce <sup>2</sup>
6–12 years old	1 cup	1 slice <sup>1</sup>	¾ cup	1 ounce <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Other grain products are encouraged beyond bread.

<sup>2</sup>Meat alternates are encouraged as snack choices.

Access the most current information on CACFP Meal Patterns at [www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov), or ask your sponsor or state agency.

The Snack Meal Pattern allows only one of the components be a beverage (milk or juice). Children’s small stomachs cannot hold a large amount of liquid. Milk and juice served together as the two snack items would not be reimbursable even though they are from different components. Milk with whole-grain cereal is a good snack choice.

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#### A Word About Water and Juice

Children need plain water often during the day. Snack time is a good time to offer water. Serve water for snacks when the two foods planned do not include a beverage. For example: crackers, cheese, and water represent a good snack. Remember, water does not meet a component requirement, but it does satisfy a child's thirst. Help children learn to think of water as a good drink choice.

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005* encourages us to choose fruit more often than juice. In the CACFP, juices served must be 100% strength. Fruit punches, ades, or fruit-flavored drinks do not meet program requirements.

Note: Some states allow serving 50% juices; however, this is discouraged. The serving size must be twice as large as 100% juice to meet the requirements. For most young children, this would be too much liquid. Check with your state agency or sponsor about the requirements in your state.

