

## Taking food without asking

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### Why is my child taking foods without asking?

A common reason children take food without asking is that they are hungry from eating differently to shape up.

Your child may also be:

- feeling anxious in school or with friends
- growing and needing more calories
- trying to get your attention
- finding food a comfort
- feeling bored or tired
- trying to control something if there is a lot happening around them
- finding it difficult to make so many changes at once

If your child is feeling or acting this way, talk to him or her about it. You may also speak with a team member, and we will help you work out a solution.

### Foods that make you feel full

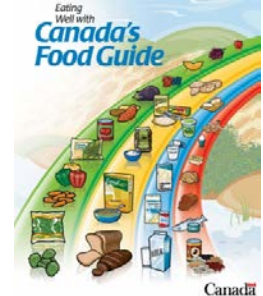
Children may be taking foods without asking because they are not feeling full at or between meal times. Foods that your child can eat to help them feel full include:

- High fibre foods – fruit, vegetables
- Protein – fish, eggs, peanut butter, nuts, legumes such as kidney beans, chickpeas and lentils
- Milk and Alternatives – milk, yogurt, cheese
- Healthy fats – small amounts of mayonnaise, vegetable oil such as canola, oil-based dressings



Try to include 3 to 4 food groups from Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide in your child's meal and 1 to 2 food groups in your child's snack. Make sure one of these food groups is a fruit or vegetable in each meal or snack.

For more information about healthy eating, get a copy of Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide at [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php)



## What should I do if I see my child is taking food without asking?

Don't panic! You may become frustrated with him or her but do not punish your child for taking food. Maintain an honest and open relationship with your child, by explaining that you know he or she is taking food without asking. Ask your child why they are taking food without asking and try to figure out a solution that works for both of you.

Be a positive role model for your child! Your child looks up to you as a parent. Remember to show good eating behaviours and make good food choices.

## Ideas to help prevent sneaking foods

Some ideas may need more planning than others. Make planning snacks a fun activity for you and your child. Ask your child for some creative ideas of what they would want as healthier snack options!

Remember that healthy snacks should include 1 to 2 food groups.



## Ideas to help prevent sneaking foods (continued)

1. **Create a snack basket.** Include a week's worth of healthy snacks. Teach your child to only take snacks from the basket. Involve your child in planning and choosing their snacks! This may take some time but it will be worth it.



2. **Always keep fresh fruits and vegetables handy!** Make up individual portions of fruit and vegetables so that they are easier for your child to eat and can be a great “grab-n-go” snack.

3. **Make up a snack schedule.** Sit down with your child and plan a snack schedule together for the week or month. If your child tends to take one type of healthy food more than another, make sure to include that food in their schedule so that they know it is coming up.



4. **Create food cards.** Give your child coloured cards each day according to the number of servings they are supposed to eat by Canada's Food Guide or by the dietitian. Each food group card will be a different colour. Your child can “trade” in cards for certain snacks.

For example, if your child wanted to have an apple and cheese as a snack they would trade in a green “fruit and vegetable” card and blue “milk and alternative” card.

5. **Help your child to ask themselves questions about why they are eating. H.A.L.T.** stands for **H**ungry, **A**ngry, **L**onely, or **T**ired and help your child ask themselves why they are eating:

- **Hungry** – Are you eating because it is meal or snack time?
- **Angry** – Are you eating because you are angry? Discuss ways they can deal with their emotions such as talking to someone or being active to let out anger.
- **Lonely** – Are you eating because you are lonely or bored? Create an activity list of other things that you can do instead of eating. Put this list up somewhere that you can see it.
- **Tired** – Are you eating because you are tired? Make sure that you sleep well the night before to prevent hunger the next day.

## Healthy snack ideas

### **Nut-free:**

“Dirty” apples – cut and core apples into wedges, place them in a bag and sprinkle 1 teaspoon of brown sugar and 1 teaspoon of cinnamon on top for a “dirty” apple look!

Fruit and yogurt dip – try regular yogurt or thicker Greek yogurt.

An apple and 2 ounces of cheese.

Yogurt parfait with fruits and bran buds – in a cup, alternate a layer of yogurt, 1 tablespoon of bran buds and fruit (such as blue berries, chopped strawberries, and bananas) and repeat for a delicious snack.

Berry smoothie – in a blender, blend together  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup frozen raspberries,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup frozen strawberries,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup vanilla yogurt and 1 cup of milk.

Veggies and hummus – cut up your favourite veggies and dip them in  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of hummus.

### **NOT nut-free:**

Ants on a log – cut up celery, spread 1 tablespoon of peanut butter on top of the curved side of the celery and place 2 to 3 raisins on top. If your child does not like raisins, you can substitute cranberries or leave it out all together!

Applesauce and 1 tablespoon of chopped nuts – sprinkle cinnamon on the applesauce to give it some extra flavour!

Banana and peanut butter – cut the banana in half lengthwise, spread 1 tablespoon of peanut butter on each side.

## Helpful resources

Kid friendly cookbooks and websites (with activities and games):

- The Mayo Clinic Kids Cookbook
- Kids Fun and Healthy Cookbook
- <http://www.nutrition.gov/life-stages/children/kids-corner>
- <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/kids/>
- <http://www.eatright.org/nnm/games/#.VHNVeL7TDL8>