

Pick a Better Snack

A family and community newsletter

IOWA
Health and
Human Services

Is Snacking OK For My Family?

Having a snack in between a meal is perfectly acceptable! Snacks help kids get the nutrients and energy they need to grow and stay active. Most kids need to eat every 3-4 hours. Plan for snacks to keep kids from grazing all day long and ruining their appetite at mealtime.

Keep healthier snacks on hand, such as fresh fruit and veggies, low-fat cheese sticks, whole grain crackers or low-fat yogurt. Create spaces in your cupboards or refrigerator that are designated spots for a healthy grab-and-go snack.

In the Pick a Better Snack program, your child will learn about a variety of fruits and vegetables and how to eat them for a snack or at a meal. Have a fun conversation with your child about what they learned and try the featured fruit or vegetable as a family. You may just find a new favorite snack!



Unplug for More Fun!

This September, we're focusing on reducing our screen-time! What's your favorite non-screen activity? Aim for 2 or less hours a day in front of a TV, smart phone or tablet device. Learn more at: <https://www.iowahealthieststate.com/5210>.



How to Pick a Good Cantaloupe

COLOR: The outside should be golden with a flat, yellowish spot, which means it ripened on the vine.

FIRMNESS: The ends of the melon should yield slightly when gently pressed. There should be no soft spots or cracks.

SMELL: It should smell good, like cantaloupe.

WEIGHT: It should feel heavy for its size compared to another cantaloupe.



Double Your Money

Double Up Food Bucks helps SNAP/EBT participants buy more fruits and vegetables. When you use your EBT card to buy fruits and vegetables at participating farmers markets and grocery stores, you'll receive FREE Double Up Food Bucks to buy more produce. Every dollar you spend is matched up to \$15 per day. Find a location near you at www.DoubleUpIowa.org.

September

B I N G O

 Park/Slide	 Play	 Ride a Bike	 Locally Grown Fruit or Veggie	 Zucchini
 Run	 Cucumber	 Stretch	 Tomato	 Walk
 Eggplant	 Hike a Trail	 Family Ate a Meal Together		
 Summer Squash	 Play	 Frozen Vegetable	 Play	 Watermelon
 Summer Squash	 Play	 Frozen Vegetable	 Canned Fruit	 Catch
 Frozen Fruit	 Melon	 Jump	 Walk	 Canned Tomato

TO PLAY:

Put an X through the squares of fruits, vegetables and physical activities you try. Get five in a row, column or diagonally for a BINGO!



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Stretching Your Food Dollar

Feeding a family is expensive. You can feed your family healthy meals, while staying within your budget. Here are a few tips to keep you on track:

- Plan your weekly meals ahead of time. Include the foods you have in your cupboards and plan to use leftovers.
- Make a grocery list and stick to it. Include items on sale.
- Buy “in season” fruits and vegetables and compare the price to frozen or canned.
- Rice and pasta are budget-friendly grain options—try to make half of your grains whole grains. Check the ingredient list on the food label; the first ingredient should say whole grain or whole wheat.
- Beans, lentils, and eggs are protein foods that cost less. You can add them to a variety of recipes.

Find other tips and budget friendly recipes at www.ChooseMyPlate.gov.



Move for Immunity!

Did you know physical activity boosts your immune system? That means if we exercise daily, we're less likely to get sick! Aim for 1 hour of physical activity a day to boost your body's germ-fighting ability in addition to eating fruits and vegetables.



How to Prepare Jicama

1. Wash jicama under running water.
2. Use a sharp paring knife or vegetable peeler to remove the skin.
3. Cut it in half to make it easier to handle.
4. Cut it into sticks, slices, or small cubes depending how you'll eat it. It can also be shredded.
5. Once it's cut, refrigerate what you don't use in a covered container for up to one week.

Farm to School

Do you wish your kids would eat more fruits and vegetables? Farm to School can help! When kids have a hand in growing fruits and vegetables, they are more likely to eat them. Farm to school can make school meals more attractive and tastier, too.

Celebrate National Farm to School Month by helping out with your school garden or connecting a farmer to the school. With farm to school, students win, farmers win, and communities win.



October

B I N G O

 Go to the Park	 Carrot	 Dribble	 Potato	 Lettuce Greens
 Apple	 Jicama	 Kick	 Canned Pears	 Rake
 Walk	 Dance	 Family Ate a Meal Together	 Melons	 Canned Vegetable
 Sweet Potato	 Play	 Frozen Vegetable	 Skate	 Pears
 Play	 Canned Sweet Potato	 Locally Grown Fruit or Veggie	 Walk	 Applesauce

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Is There Really Junk Food?

Cookies, chips, candy, soda. These are often labeled as “junk foods.” Labeling foods as “junk” or “bad” can lead people to eat in unhealthy ways.

“You can have some chips when you eat half your sandwich first.” Avoid statements like this so that one food doesn’t sound better to eat than another. Create a balance tone to prevent negative feelings about food.

If your family enjoys a little sweet treat at the end of a meal, let your child have a portion, say one cookie, no matter what is left on the plate. You’re treating the cookie just like the rest of the meal.

Yes, some foods have more nutrients than others, but all foods can fit in. Do your best to offer a wide variety of foods at regular meal and snack times.



Stretch and De-Stress!

The holiday season can be stressful for many people. Oftentimes, when we feel stressed, our kids do too. Yoga and deep breathing can be fun ways to cope with busy schedules. Try these kid yoga exercises with your family.

www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga



WIC

WIC is a program for families with babies and children under age 5 as well as pregnant women and women who recently had a baby. To find a WIC clinic near you, go to www.signupwic.com. Eligible families will receive healthy foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support and referrals to other health care professionals. WIC is a great place to get help feeding your children.



All Forms Count

In the Pick Better Snack program, we talk about eating fruits and vegetables in different forms. That means there are many ways you can enjoy fruits and vegetables: fresh, canned, frozen, dried, and as juice.

You can buy cranberries in any form. Generally, it’s best to choose options without added sugars and salt, but it’s more important that you and your family eat fruits and vegetables. How will you eat cranberries this month?



November

B I N G O

				
Play	Cranberries	Walk	Squash	Grapes
				
Potato	Play	Sweet Potato	Walk	100% Fruit Juice
				
Skip	Frozen Vegetables	Family Ate a Meal Together		Toss
				
Canned Fruit or Vegetable	Run	Jicama	Jump	Sweet Potato
				
Kohlrabi or Brussel Sprouts	Raisins	Ride a Bike	Carrot	Stretch

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Feeding Picky Eaters

Many families have a picky eater, which can make mealtimes a struggle! However, it's still important to serve your family a variety of foods to help them get the nutrients they need to fully develop and thrive. But how do you get your picky eater to try something new? Here are some ideas:

- Ask your child to help with meal prep! This will create excitement in the meal, and they will be more willing to try it.
- Make fun shapes out of your food or create things like smiley faces with condiments.
- Start with a small amount of the food they don't want to eat.
- Model good behaviors. Your child does follow what they see.
- Don't give up after one attempt with a new food.

Stay positive with your picky eater during this process. It will help create a safer environment to try new things.



Move Together!

Fitting in time for physical activity doesn't have to feel like a chore! Exercising with a friend or family member makes movement fun! Find an "exercise buddy" to do an at-home activity. Lots of ideas are available at <https://www.hy-veekidsfit.com/>.



How to Prepare Broccoli and Cauliflower

WASH: Rinse cauliflower or broccoli under running water. Don't use soap.

CUT: Remove the cauliflower leaves and cut away the large stem. Cut off the florets into bite-size pieces. Broccoli is similar. Cut off the florets. The stem can be peeled and cut into bite-size pieces to eat, too.

REFRIGERATE: Store what you don't eat in the refrigerator for 3-5 days.



We Can Help

Good food is important for the health and well-being of your family. Sometimes it can be hard to buy the foods you want your family to eat. Many resources exist to help children and families eat well. The We Can Help brochure lists food and nutrition resources—like recipes, nutrition programs, summer meals and apps. Check it out in 10 different languages at the bottom of this page: <https://hhs.iowa.gov/programs-and-services/healthy-eating-active-living>



December

B I N G O

				
Dance	Banana	Snow Angels	Canned Fruit	Carrots
				You Choose!
Play in the Snow	Jump	Walk	Kiwi	Any Fruit or Vegetable
		Family Ate a Meal Together		
Potatoes	Beets			Play
				
Banana	Walk	Broccoli	Cauliflower	Play
				
Shoot Hoops	Frozen Vegetables	Kiwi	Stretch	Salad Greens

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Family Meals Can Be Fun!

Most families want to eat together regularly but only one-third achieve this goal. Work schedules, school activities and living situations are a few things that make it difficult. Take small steps to eat together as a family more often:

- Commit to 1 or 2 meals a week (breakfast on Sunday or dinner on Thursday, for example).
- Keep meals simple. Make extra for another meal.
- Turn off electronics and focus on each other.
- Sit at the table, even if there are only two of you, and talk.

Besides developing healthy eating habits, children will benefit from family meals in other ways:

- A closer relationship with their parents or caretakers
- Better academic performance and self-esteem
- Less likely to have behavioral issues or engage in risky behaviors, such as drug, alcohol or tobacco use, when they're older



New Year, New You!

The beginning of the year is a great time to re-focus on wellness. Through the 5-2-1-0 Healthy Choices Count! program, you and your family can learn how to set realistic goals to improve your health. Learn more about the program and find free resources at www.iowahealthieststate.com/5210.



Mangoes

- You may notice different types of mangoes at the store. Try them to see which you like best.
- A ripe mango will give slightly when you squeeze it. Color is not a good judge of ripeness.
- You can leave an unripe mango on the counter for a few days to ripen it. Put it in a paper sack to speed up the process.
- Mangoes are easy to eat once you learn how to cut them: www.mango.org/how-to-cut-a-mango/



Spend Smart Eat Smart

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach created Spend Smart Eat Smart (SSES) to help you eat well on a budget. SSES is a website and a free mobile app. You can find recipes, videos for preparing foods, nutrition information as well as tips for buying and storing foods. There's also help for being more active. You can create your own physical activity plan and participate in at-home video workouts. Try it today at www.spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu.



January

B I N G O

				
Play	Frozen Fruit	Catch	Garbanzo Beans / Chick Peas	Salad Greens
				
Stretch	Build a Fort	Run	Canned Fruit	Squash
				
Frozen Vegetables	Stretch	Family Ate a Meal Together		Snow Angels
				
Kiwi	Play	Canned Beans	Squash	Hummus
				
Walk	Edamame	Mango	Bowl	Sled

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Kids In The Kitchen

Kids love to help. Getting them involved with meal or snack preparation is one way to get your child to try a new food. There are many things children can assist with in the kitchen, depending on their age, ability to follow directions and your comfort level. Children of all ages can help with the menu, such as selecting the vegetable or snack. Start cooking with your child now so that they will grow up with confidence to prepare their own meals.

5 – 7 year-olds can:

- Wash fruits and vegetables (small amounts at a time)
- Set the table, clear their own plate
- Cut with child scissors or lettuce knives
- Mix, mash, sprinkle
- Measure

8 – 9 year-olds can:

- Use a can opener
- Chop, slice, dice (with round tip knives and supervision)
- Add seasonings
- Read recipes
- Wash dishes



Protect Your Heart!

February is National Heart Month! Even if it's cold outside, there are plenty of ways to get active indoors. Visit the American Heart Association for fun ideas to get your heart pumping in the comfort of your own home!

<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/getting-active>

PLAY
YOUR WAY
One Hour a Day

Bell Peppers

SELECT: Choose firm, shiny peppers with skin that is tight and unwrinkled. Avoid cracks or black spots.

STORE: Refrigerate peppers in a plastic bag and use within 5 days.

WASH: Rinse peppers under cool running water right before eating or cutting them.

EAT: Try them raw, or dice and add to quesadillas, pasta, omelets, pizza or a stir fry.

These tips are adapted from [Iowa State University's Spend Smart. Eat Smart.](https://www.iastate.edu/extension/county/yourlifeiowa/)®

Your Life Iowa

Everyone needs help sometimes. When you don't know who to turn to, Your Life Iowa is here for you 24/7. Whether it's alcohol, drugs, gambling, mental health, suicidal thoughts or something else. Whether it's for you, a family member or someone else you know. Free and confidential help and information is available by phone (855) 581-8111, by text (855) 895-8398 or online chat at <https://yourlifeiowa.org/>. Not sure if you're at risk? Take our online quiz or check out the warning signs for alcohol, drugs, gambling and mental health. Reach out today! No judgment. Just help.



February

B I N G O

				
Play	Canned Vegetables	Build	Peppers	Pineapple
				
Dance	Banana	Play	Frozen Vegetables	Kick
				
Curtido, Kimchi or Sauerkraut	Bowl		Broccoli	Shoot
				
Canned Fruit	Stretch	Banana	Frozen Fruit	Walk
				
Walk	Peppers	Pickles	Park/Climb	Tomato Sauce

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Worry Less at Mealtimes

Parents often worry about their children, saying things like “My daughter eats like a bird” or “Our son won’t eat any vegetables.”

You may worry less when you understand the Satter Division of Responsibility in Feeding. Your job is to provide regular meals and snacks that include a variety of foods. After that, it’s your child’s job to decide what and how much to eat. This takes practice and can be hard, but in the long run, your child will eat the right amounts and learn to like many different foods.

For more information about feeding and about practical ways to have family meals, go to <https://www.elynsatterinstitute.org/how-to-feed>



Spring Into Action!

With the weather getting warmer, this is a great time to get back into healthy habits outdoors. Plan nightly bike rides or walks after dinner as a family to connect with one another and improve your health. Find a trail near you by visiting www.trailink.com/state/ia-trails/



Crazy for Citrus Fruits

ORANGES: Peel and eat. Or, cut the orange in half lengthwise and each half into 3 or 4 wedges. Then remove the peel with your hands or just bite off the juicy fruit.

CLEMENTINES: Peel—they are usually easier to peel than oranges—and eat. Kids can do this!

GRAPEFRUIT: Cut in half and scoop out each section with a spoon. You may have to cut around each section first. Or, cut the grapefruit into wedges and then cut off the peel.

Healthy Choices Count!

5-2-1-0 helps you remember health goals for your child each day:

- 5 or more fruits and vegetables
- 2 hours or less of recreational screen time
- 1 hour or more of physical activity
- 0 sugary drinks; drink more water

Change is hard and setbacks are normal. You likely won’t reach your goal every day. Pick one area and start small. Can you serve a fruit at snack time? Can you play outside with your child? Find more ideas at <https://www.iowahealthieststate.com/5210>.



March

B I N G O

				
Park/Slide	Frozen Peas	Ride a Bike	Dried Beans	Lemon/Lime
				
Play	Grapefruit	Run	Orange	Walk
				
Sugar Snap Peas	Stretch		Dribble	Frozen Fruit
				
Okra	Throw	Clementine	Corn	Park/Climb
				
Walk	Frozen Vegetable	Canned Fruit	Jump	100% Fruit Juice

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Healthy Choices When Eating Out

Eating out can be a fun thing to do with your family! Whether going to a sit-down restaurant or picking up takeout, you can enjoy eating out while still making healthier choices.

- Choose healthier sides like vegetables, fruit or cottage cheese rather than a fried item, like French fries.
- Think about the drink. Many kid's meals offer milk—a better choice than pop. If juice is available, ask if it is 100% juice. Water is always an option, too!
- Compare the calories on the menu or menu board for the right choice for you or your child.

The next time you eat out, check out all the options before you order and enjoy a night of no cooking.



Earth Day

This month, we're encouraging you to get active while helping the earth! Pick up trash at a local park, plant a garden, or go on a scavenger hunt finding different kinds of plants in your neighborhood. Post your Earth Day activity on social media and tag #PlayYourWay so we can share what you've done!



SNAP Online Shopping

Did you know? You can shop online and use the SNAP/EBT card to pay for food (not delivery costs) at Amazon and some ALDI, Walmart, Hy-Vee and other grocery stores in Iowa.

<https://hhs.iowa.gov/assistance-programs/food-assistance/snap>



Pick a Better Snack

Eat Fruits and Veggies

Parts of the Plant

In the Pick a Better Snack program, students learn that we eat parts of a plant. For example, potatoes are roots, broccoli is a flower, strawberries are fruit and beans are seeds.

This month, students learned about stems. What stems do we eat? Yes! Asparagus, celery and rhubarb are all stems that we eat.

Next time you eat a vegetable, ask your child what part of the plant it is. It's a fun way to learn science.



Supplemental
Nutrition
Assistance
Program

April

B I N G O

				
Peach	Walk	Stretch	Park/Swing	Asparagus
				
Play	Celery	Skate	Rhubarb	Toss
				
Canned Fruit	Avocado			Spinach or Kale
				
Skip	Frozen Peaches	Dance	Locally Grown Fruit or Veggie	Canned Vegetable
				
Guacamole	Walk	Microgreens or Leafy Greens	Fly a Kite	Apricot

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Be A Mindful Eater

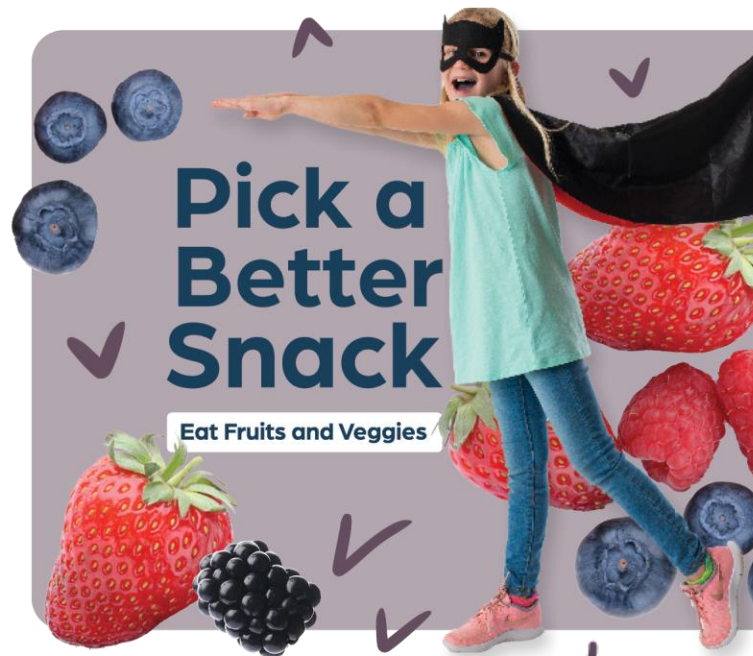
With our busy schedules, it can be easy to eat on the go or hurry through a meal. We often eat while working, driving or in front of a screen. There is a better way!

Food is not just fuel for your body; it should be savored and satisfying. Being a mindful eater makes you aware of the food you put into your body, how it tastes and how it makes you feel. Some ways you and your family can practice mindful eating is:

- Slow down when eating your food.
- Notice the smell, taste and texture of food.
- Have technology-free meals—no phones or TV.
- Recognize when you are full; eat when you are hungry.
- Avoid multitasking when eating.

Healthy eating is not just what you eat but also how you eat.

Adapted from www.uwhealth.org.



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Eat Fruits and Veggies



Hydration Challenge

Summer months mean more fun in the sun! Through the Play Your Way campaign, we've encouraged you to be active for 60 minutes every day. We sweat more while playing outside in the heat, which means we should be drinking more water! Challenge yourself to 1 hour of physical activity and at least 1 liter of water every day to stay healthy and hydrated all summer long!



Berries

SELECT: Choose berries that are firm, plump and rich in color. Avoid berries that are shriveled or wet.

STORE: Refrigerate berries in a ventilated container. Raspberries will keep only 1-2 days, strawberries for up to 3 days, and blueberries up to one week.

WASH: Rinse berries under cool running water right before eating. Don't rinse before refrigerating.

EAT: Berries taste great fresh by themselves, or add them to yogurt, a smoothie or lettuce salad.

These tips are adapted from Iowa State University's Spend Smart. Eat Smart.

Free Summer Meals

Free lunches are served to children age 18 and under in most communities during the summer. Many locations also have fun activities, like gardening, crafts and games, that your kids can do before or after they eat. To find a meal site near you, text "Food" or "Comida" (for Spanish) to 304-304 or visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/summer/sunmeals>.



May

B I N G O

 Walk	 Raspberry	 Play	 Turnip	 Ride a Bike
 Catch	 Plant	 Blueberry	 Walk	 Frozen Vegetable
 Strawberry	 Swing	 Family Ate a Meal Together		 Canned Vegetables
 Kale	 Play	 Locally Grown Fruit or Veggie	 Run	 Canned Fruit
 Park/Slide	 Spinach	 Asparagus	 Kick	 Frozen Berries

TO PLAY:

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