

FitFacts®

Why do all kids' programs include snack time?

IT SEEMS THAT SNACKS ARE USED IN MANY SITUATIONS AS A GUARANTEED TIME TO MAKE THE KIDS HAPPY AND PASS A FEW MINUTES—SOMETHING EASY TO BUILD INTO ALMOST EVERY ACTIVITY – LIKE CHURCH, GIRL SCOUTS, SPORTS GAMES AND PLAYGROUPS. UNFORTUNATELY, PROVIDING SNACKS IS OFTEN UNNECESSARY AND FREQUENTLY INTERFERES WITH KIDS EATING BALANCED MEALS AT MEALTIMES. SNACKS CAN ALSO CREATE AN UNHEALTHY EMOTIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD. WHEN AN ADULT ASSOCIATES JUNK FOOD WITH HAPPY TIMES IN CHILDHOOD, HE OR SHE MAY USE THOSE SAME UNHEALTHY FOODS TO TRY TO EMOTIONALLY RECREATE OR RECONNECT WITH HAPPY TIMES. SO WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT?

If you're a parent facing a similar struggle, here are a couple of ideas:

- 1. Advocacy.** Suggest that the group or team develop a policy that snacks be healthy. Along these lines, you could also make sure that, when it is your turn to bring the snacks, you bring a very healthy (but tasty) snack to set an example. If the other parents see that the kids love the healthy snack, maybe some of them will do the same.
- 2. Teach the signs of hunger and fullness.** Help your kids learn how to identify signs of hunger and fullness, and remind them to eat when they're hungry and stop when they're full. If that means they aren't hungry at snack time, then they should know that it is okay to not eat anything.
- 3. Let it go.** If you feel that the battle is not worth fighting in certain situations, it is okay to just let it go. Ultimately, parents cannot possibly protect their kids from all potentially "harmful" influencers. You probably wouldn't want to, anyway, since highly controlling and restrictive parents tend to have children who rebel against their parents' best wishes anyway. At the end of the day, an unnecessary snack here and there is not going to make that much of a difference (though it could if many different organizations are doing it on a regular basis).



Health-conscious parents should keep doing what they already are doing—creating an environment at home (where the kids spend most of their time) that supports healthy and balanced eating.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[American Council on Exercise](#)

[Advocates for Health in Action](#)

[Great School](#)

[United States Department of Agriculture](#)