

Healthy morning snack, lunch, and afternoon snack Guide for Daycare Families

Providing healthy snacks is essential for supporting growth, brain development, and energy throughout the day. This guide offers nutritious morning snack, lunch, and afternoon snack ideas for children from 6 months to 12 months, ensuring age-appropriate, safe, and balanced options.

Brain Development

During the first five years, a child's brain develops faster than at any other time in life. Nutrients like iron, omega-3 fatty acids, protein, and vitamins A, D, and B12 support brain growth, memory, and attention. Malnutrition or poor eating habits can lead to slower cognitive development and difficulty focusing or learning.

Physical Growth and Strength

Proper nutrition provides the energy and building blocks for bone, muscle, and organ development. Foods rich in calcium, vitamin D, and protein help children grow taller, stronger, and healthier. Balanced meals prevent obesity, underweight, and other health concerns that can affect participation in play and learning.

Immune System and Overall, Health

Healthy foods strengthen the immune system, reducing illnesses that cause absences from school or daycare. Fruits, vegetables, and whole grains supply essential vitamins and antioxidants that protect the body from infections.

Behavior and Emotional Regulation

Consistent nutrition helps stabilize energy levels and mood throughout the day. Skipping meals or eating high-sugar foods can cause irritability, tiredness, or difficulty following routines in the classroom.

School Readiness and Learning Success

A well-nourished child is more likely to concentrate, participate, and learn effectively in early learning environments. Teachers can observe stronger language, social, and problem-solving skills when children have consistent access to nutritious meals and snacks.

6–12 Months (Infants Starting Solids)

At this stage, snacks should be soft, easy to swallow, and made from single ingredients to identify any allergies.

Examples for morning snack:

- Mashed banana or avocado
- Soft, cooked vegetables (carrots, sweet potatoes, peas)
- Unsweetened applesauce or fruit puree
- Plain whole milk yogurt (if age-appropriate)
- Small pieces of soft fruit (peeled pears, ripe mango, watermelon)
- Baby rice crackers or teething biscuits

Tip: Always cut food vertical, manageable pieces and supervise eating to prevent choking.

6–12 Months (Infants Beginning Solids)

At this stage, food should be soft, easy to chew, and introduced one at a time to monitor for allergies.

Examples for lunch:

- Protein: Mashed lentils, shredded soft chicken, or scrambled egg yolk
- Carbohydrate: Mashed sweet potatoes or soft, cooked rice
- Vegetable: Steamed carrots or peas, mashed avocado
- Fruit (Dessert): Mashed banana or pureed pear

Infants (6–12 months)

Always ensure foods are soft, mashed, or cut into safe sizes for their developmental stage.

Examples for afternoon snacks:

- Mashed banana or avocado
- Plain whole-milk yogurt with mashed fruit (no added sugar)
- Soft-cooked apple or pear slices (peeled and mashed)
- Baby oatmeal mixed with breast milk or formula
- Small pieces of soft cheese (around 9–12 months)
- Rice cakes or teething biscuits (for older infants)

Healthy Drink Options

- Water (best choice throughout the day)
 - Milk (whole milk up to age 2; low-fat or 1% for 2+ years)
 - Smoothies made with fruit and milk or yogurt
- Avoid: juices with added sugar, soda, or sports drinks.

General Tips for Parents

- Include one fruit or vegetable with every snack.
- Avoid foods that are choking hazards (whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, hard candy, raw carrots) for younger children.
- Choose minimally processed foods with low sugar and salt.
- Encourage children to eat slowly and mindfully.

Little Star
Letting your little star always shine!