

## Ask Nurse Rona: Healthy Snacks on the Go

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**Q:** *Even though I try to feed my 2-year-old twins healthy foods, I find that when I go to parks or play dates, I grab what's easy. Sometimes I give them junk food (I know I shouldn't) because it keeps them happy and willing to get into their car seats.*

**A:** Having 2-year-old twins is a strong motivator for finding easy and fast ways to feed your children. Don't be hard on yourself if you need to have snack foods on hand. But keep in mind that habits form fast, and if you use pre-packaged high calorie snacks frequently, you'll find that your children develop a strong taste for three things that have greatly influenced the epidemic of over-weight adults and children: fat, sugar, and salt.

Pediatrician Dr. David Kessler has a new book called *The End of Overeating: Taking Control Of The Insatiable American Appetite*. In the book, Dr. Kessler cracks the code of overeating by explaining how our bodies and minds are changed when we consume foods that contain sugar, fat, and salt: *"Food manufacturers create products by manipulating these ingredients to stimulate our appetites, setting in motion a cycle of desire and consumption that ends with a nation of overeaters."*

As I listened to him speak recently I realized that young children these days are more likely to get pre-packaged snacks and treats in part because parents are more rushed and look for convenience foods to save time and fuss. And we're seeing the consequences of this.

### So what can parents do?

- Start young babies off with vegetables instead of fruits so they develop a taste for food that isn't overly sweet.
- Cook fresh foods like beans, sweet potatoes, and carrots in a steamer and then refrigerate or freeze them so they're easily available during the week.
- Put together baggies of healthy treats like raisins and nuts, blueberries and melon, and whole grain cereal with dried cranberries. Slice an apple and sprinkle with a little lemon juice to keep it from browning, and add some peanut butter for dipping. Make popcorn, and buy unsalted rice cakes that you can also put the peanut butter on. Snap peas, beans, and tofu can make healthy snacks, especially if you present them as a "treat." You may even want to have a small ice chest in the car for things like yogurt, string cheese, or left over chicken.
- Don't give-in to your child's pleas for soda. Let them know that water is a good way to quench their thirst. Talk to your pediatrician about how much juice and milk you should offer each day.
- Plant a garden if you can, and grow things like cherry tomatoes and strawberries. Your children can grow and pick their own snacks.

So pack up the kids and the snacks and do your best to keep them healthy. If you need to get some quick packaged foods, look for ones that are low in salt, sugar, and fat.

Best of luck to you and your kids!