Did you know that frequent snacking is tied to obesity? In fact, today's kids average nearly three snacks a day and get about a quarter of their daily calories from between-meal eating. Use these strategies to keep your youngster's snacking under control.

Add nutrients
Encourage snacks that will contribute to your child's nutrient intake, rather than her sugar or salt intake. For instance, swap a banana for cookies, sugar snap peas for chips, and fat-free milk for juice. To motivate her to choose healthy snacks, speak her language: Try offering “strong snacks for your muscles” or “smart snacks for your brain.”

Avoid grazing
Eating all day long makes it hard for your youngster to burn off fat. Together, decide when she'll snack (perhaps after school and an hour before bed). Then, have her sit down instead of eating on the run and—most important—keep the television and other electronics off. “Distracted eating” causes kids to eat more, since they’re not paying attention to how much they put in their mouths.

Watch serving sizes
Keep snacks a reasonable size. Pick up little bowls at a discount store, and use them for small servings of vegetable or miso soup, whole-grain cereal, or unsweetened applesauce (sprinkled with cinnamon). Or make your own “snack packs” by putting tangerine sections, a handful of nuts, or grape tomatoes into snack-size baggies.

Pre-diabetes: A plan
If your child is diagnosed with pre-diabetes, take heart. There are steps you can take to try to prevent him from developing full-blown type 2 diabetes.

1. Be active. Exercise lowers blood glucose levels as well as body fat. He should aim for 60 minutes a day of physical activity.
2. Eat a healthy diet with lots of vegetables, high-fiber foods, and whole grains. Stay away from foods with added sugar.
3. Maintain a healthy weight. Work with a registered dietitian, a nutritionist, or another health professional on ways to shed pounds.

Note: Diabetes warning signs include increased thirst, frequent urination, unusual tiredness, and blurry vision. If you notice any of these problems, consult a doctor.

© 2016 Resources for Educators, a division of CCH Incorporated
USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
Eating in different “languages”

Food is a fun—and delicious—way to expose your child to different cultures. These activities will teach him about diversity while he discovers new foods.

**Country to country.** Help your youngster understand how people express their backgrounds through the foods they eat. Ask him what foods he sees at other people’s houses that he doesn’t eat at home—and what foods you serve that his friends don’t have. Let him explore foods at ethnic markets, and bring some home to try.

---

**Hit the track**

My neighbor recently mentioned that he runs on the high school track when it’s not being used. I realized that would be a great place for my son Joey and me to take up running.

At first we alternated walking and running—walking 3 minutes and running for 1 minute once around the track. After a week, we switched to 2 minutes of each. Eventually, we worked up to walking 1 minute, running 3 minutes, and then finally to running the whole time. Joey was excited to learn that each loop around the track is a quarter-mile. He has already set a goal to run 1 mile without stopping.

I’m glad we’re spending time together and getting fit together. Maybe he’ll even run on the track one day as a member of his high school’s track team!

---

**Fun with obstacle courses**

These ideas present no obstacle to getting fit! You and your youngster can create obstacle courses for her to run, crawl, and dash through with elements like these.

- **Stepping-stone climb.** Line up steps of varying heights with telephone books, step stools, or old cushions.
- **Tunnel crawl.** Drape an old sheet over lawn chairs, or cut the ends off large cardboard boxes.
- **Zig-zag run.** Set up soccer cones in a pattern for weaving in and out.
- **Shoebox slide.** Put out two shoe boxes. Step in (one foot in each), and slide from one point to another.
- **Wagon pull.** Fill a wagon with stuffed animals, and pull back and forth between two spots.

---

**Super sliders**

Your family is sure to get a kick out of these healthy versions of sliders (miniature burgers).

- **Chicken and waffles**
  Bake or grill boneless chicken breast, or use leftover cooked chicken. Drizzle with a little pure maple syrup. Sandwich between two toasted mini whole-grain waffles.

- **Meatball**
  Roll lean ground beef into meatballs. Broil until cooked through, about 6 minutes (flip midway). Place each meatball on the bottom of a mini whole-wheat roll, cover with ⅛ slice mozzarella cheese, and broil 1 minute more. Spread the top half of the bun with 1 tbsp. marinara sauce, heat, and put the sandwich together.

- **Salmon**
  In a blender, combine 1 cup plain Greek yogurt, ½ cucumber, and 2 tbsp. fresh dill (or 2 tsp. dried). Set aside. Broil or grill salmon fillets, 4–5 minutes per side. Cut into small pieces, and place each in a multigrain dinner roll with a dollop of sauce.