Cracking the Snacking Code:

What does the research say about snacks and health?

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Snacking has evolved...

• Age 2-6 years
  ▪ 1977: 77% of children were snacking
  ▪ 2006: 99% of children were snacking

• 27% of their calories are coming from snacking

Snacking is the 4th meal
Snacking isn’t just kid stuff

% of adults having 3+ snacks daily

- Adults and parents are snacking more
- Snacking is a 4th, 5th, 6th meal....

http://ars.usda.gov/Services/docs.htm?docid=18349
Snacking has “grown”

- Among both boys and girls, 2 in 3 have AT LEAST 3 snacks daily

Chart Title

http://ars.usda.gov/Services/docs.htm?docid=18349
Trends in Snacking

- Larger % of all age groups were snacking
- 2-6 year-olds at more snacks than other groups
- 2-6 year-olds ate 182 more calories in 2006 than in 1977

http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/29/3/398.full.html
Snacks: What’s in them?

- Kids are getting more “negatives” from snacking

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Kids’ snacking: More salty snacks & candy

Proportion of Snacking Calories from Food Groupings in U.S. Children Ages 2–18, 1977–2006
Trends In Snacking Among U.S. Children, Health Affairs, 2010
Snacking on “Nutrients of Concern”

But most STILL don’t get enough of these nutrients

Children 2-5:
- Potassium
- Vitamin D
- Fiber

12015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee
aData unpublished, manuscript submitted. Storey & Anderson. 2015, Adv Nutr
Milk is NOT just for bottles

- Not after 24 months*
- Often a Toddlers often want milk ONLY from a bottle
- CONCERN: After age 5 years, kids don’t get enough calcium
- Solution:
  - Transition gradually but consistently
  - Offer milk as a default snack

*AAP
After 24 months: CHANGE THE BOTTLE

- Bottle feeding
  - Can be disruptive
  - Can displace other needed foods
  - Often contains inappropriate drinks
Parental perceptions of snacks & snacking

• Low income mothers’ perceptions of snacks fed to pre-school children
• 7 focus groups

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2014.09.007
5 emerging themes

• Snacks involve less preparation, balance & nutrition
• Snacks are not “real food”
• Moms like snacks, too
• Access to snacks needs to be controlled
• Snacks help control children’s behavior

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2014.09.007
Snacks need less prep, balance & “sustenance”

- Often single foods or dishes
- Less expectation of nutrition & balance
- “holdovers”
- Quick & convenient

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2014.09.007
Snacks are not “real food”

• If perceived as not “real food” then less required nutritionally.

• It’s what kids eat “between” real food

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2014.09.007
MOMS like snacks, too

- They like the same types of snacks their kids did
- Many feel a loss of control with snacks
- Concern about passing their habits on to their children

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2014.09.007
Snack food access needs to be controlled

- Highly palatable, almost hedonic
- Highly desired, in contrast to meals
- Access & portions must be controlled: Corroborates a lack of association between snacks and healthy food

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2014.09.007
Snacks manage children’s behavior

- Keep children quiet
- “bribe” to eat meals or sit still
- Prevent tantrums/meltdowns
- Snacks are highly desired, in contrast to meals

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2014.09.007
HOW TO HIT THE TRIFECTA

- Happy parents
- Happy kids
- Happy WIC clinicians (with healthier families)
Look for overlap of the “must-haves”

• YOU want healthy snacks
• THEY want happy kids
• They NEED:
  ▪ Convenience
  ▪ Economy
  ▪ Satisfied kids who don’t whine
Empowering parents

- Must be motivational
- Meet parents where they are
  - Go beyond nutrition
  - YOUR goals and THEIR goals must overlap
Give permission

- To set limits with snacks
- To say "no" or "not now"
- To NOT reward food tantrums
- For snacks to be "real food"
Give previews of coming attractions

• TELL PARENTS WHAT TO EXPECT from your advice
• Tantrums are normal
• Tell how to manage the beginning, middle and end of food tantrums
• Consistency is critical, but so is praise for progress
The APP for snacking

- HEALTHIER DEFAULTS
  - Nutrient-rich options
  - Lower-calorie options
  - Encourage foods that close dietary gaps

- PLAN AHEAD
  - Never leave home without one!
  - No surprises: Keep kids in the loop
DEFINE “TREATS”

• A “once in a while food”?  
  ▪ Economy?  
  ▪ Poor nutritional value?  
  ▪ Limited availability

• Hint: if it’s every day or several times weekly, it’s a “LIFESTYLE”
LEVERAGE THE POSITIVES

• What fruits, veggies, low-fat dairy & whole grain foods does the child like?
  ▪ Most kids like at least a few of each
  ▪ Make these the go-to DEFAULT snacks

• Point out economy & convenience
Point out economy & convenience of healthy snacks

- Cheaper from home
  - Carton of milk vs. bottle of soda
  - Piece of fruit vs. bag of chips
- Fewer impulse purchases
- Planning ahead saves time
“Watermelon — it's a good fruit. You eat, you drink, you wash your face.”

~ Enrico Caruso
Empowering parents

- Must be motivational
- Go beyond nutrition
- Must give a “win-win”
  - Healthful
  - Convenient
  - Desirable by kids AND moms
  - Available
  - Affordable
TAKE-AWAYS

• Snacking is here to stay -- more than ever before
• Snacking has to change: nearly 1/3 of empty calories come from snacks
• Low-fat dairy, fruit, veggies, are underconsumed and SHOULD be strongly represented among snacks
TAKE-AWAYS

• Snacking doesn’t HAVE to go away – just get better
• Behaviors change when education and motivation combine
• Transition to healthier snacks as DEFAULTS