

# Letters to Parents



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Department of Health

## The Art of Eating Snacks

Dear Parents,

You may be aware of unhealthy eating habits, such as frequent consumption of the snacks or chosen unhealthy snacks, may lead to affecting appetite of main meals, developing obesity, malnutrition and adverse health effects. This issue is to share the tips on snacks classification, portion control and eating time. With this knowledge, you will be able to help your children develop a proper snacking habit.

### What is a Snack?

Snack is a small amount of food consumed between two main meals. When children cannot obtain enough nutrients and energy from main meals, snacks may help. A proper snacking habit will not spoil the appetite for the main meal and it is recommended to allow at least 1.5 to 2 hours between main meals and snack time. You can teach your children to take note if they are really hungry before snacking at recess or tea time, and pay attention to their appetite at main meals in order to adjust the timing and amount of snacks to consume.

First, we can use the three colours of the traffic light to classify snacks of different nutritional value to help decide which can be consumed more frequently.

#### “Snacks to Choose Less”



Represented by Red light, snacks in this group are low in nutritional value or high in fat, salt or sugar content. Frequent consumption increases the risk of chronic diseases, such as obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart diseases. I believe, as caring parents, you are unwilling to see your children develop health problems from eating too much of these snacks.

#### “Snacks to Choose in Moderation”



Represented by Yellow light, these snacks have some nutritional value but contain higher fat, salt or sugar content. Children should limit the consumption of such snacks say to less than two times a week. Otherwise, the adverse health effects are no different from those caused by frequent consumption of ‘red light’ snacks.

#### “Snacks of Choice”



Represented by Green light, these snacks are healthier choices because they provide important nutrients and have lower fat, salt and sugar content.

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We recommend school tuck shops not to provide 'red light' snacks, and encourage you to support a healthy eating policy and environment in schools by prompting your children not to bring unhealthy snacks to schools.

As a gentle reminder, eating too much of any food (including healthier snacks) may affect health. Remember 'healthy eating makes you happy and overeating bloats your belly!'.

## **Nutritional Guidelines on Snacks for Student (Latest Version)**

For more information about classification of snacks, definition on 'green light' pre-packaged snacks, food labelling and recommended serving size of snacks, please refer to:

[https://school.eatsmart.gov.hk/files/pdf/snack\\_guidelines\\_bi.pdf](https://school.eatsmart.gov.hk/files/pdf/snack_guidelines_bi.pdf)

Wishing you health and happiness!

Dietitian

'EatSmart@school.hk' campaign

The Department of Health

