

Pointers For Parents

Healthy Snacking = Smart Nutrition

(NAPSA)—Older babies and toddlers are bundles of energy and need the proper fuel, such as extra calcium, iron, protein, zinc and calories, to keep them going strong. The great news for parents is that children love to snack—an important source of nutrition and energy. Plus, growing babies and toddlers still have small stomachs, so they can't get all the nutrients they need from three large meals a day—making “mini-meals,” or healthy snacks balanced between larger meals, a smart way to supplement nutrient needs.

Not all snacks, however, are created equal. Kathleen Reidy, Dr. P.H., R.D., with Gerber Products Company, offers convenient tips to help parents—and children — enjoy healthy, easy snacks.

- **Grow strong with snacks.** Smart snacks can help deliver the key nutrients older babies and toddlers need. Plus, Gerber® Graduates snack items, for example, are specially fortified for young children with nutrients they need for healthy growth and development, including calcium, iron and zinc.

- **Listen up.** Parents should look to their child to understand when he has had enough to eat. They can watch for cues—from playing with his food and dropping his spoon...to saying simple words like “no” or throwing his food—as eating skills develop.

Respect your child when he's full, as he only needs to eat enough to satisfy his hunger. When he shows signs that he's done, remove the food or let him leave the table. Don't make him clean his plate; this is a time when it's important for a child to learn to rely on his own appetite



to tell him how much to eat. Parents can offer a nutritious snack later, if the child is hungry.

- **Use snacks to supplement.** If a child is coming up short on fruits and vegetables during mealtime, parents can use snacks to encourage older babies and toddlers to eat more of these nutrient-packed foods.

- **Keep the fat in snacks.** Although parents try to restrict it in their own diets, fat is an essential nutrient for older babies and toddlers. Fat helps the brain and nervous system develop. Whole cow's milk and other whole-milk dairy products, like yogurt and cheese, rather than low-fat varieties, are appropriate until age two for most children. Other nutritious snacks for toddlers that also provide fat include lean meats, poultry, eggs and modest amounts of cheese.

Gerber® also offers a unique feeding plan to help parents choose the foods with the right nutrition and appropriate textures for each stage of their little one's development. For more information or to request copies of the Gerber® feeding plan, contact the Gerber Parents Resource Center™ 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at 1-800-4-GERBER or www.gerber.com.