

## Snack rainbows for the under-fives

As soon as children start speaking, it's often not long before we begin to hear the word 'more' – especially in connection with food. Shortly afterwards, it may be followed by a question that we come to hear often: "Can I have a snack, please?"

Snack rainbows are a healthy way of giving our children snacks, and are also a perfect opportunity to talk to them about the foods they are eating. We can tell them how foods of different colours work in different ways to help their bodies grow fit and healthy.

Here are some foods in their different colour groups that are great healthy snacks for children. While they enjoy munching away, why not take the opportunity to explain why they are so good.

### Red

**Foods to try** – apples, strawberries, raspberries, tomatoes, pomegranates.

**What makes these good?** The plant chemicals in red foods support a healthy heart and circulation, protect our digestive systems, are powerful antioxidants, and support our immunity.

**Message for children** – These foods are great for helping your body fight germs and will help you to develop a good memory.

### Orange

**Foods to try** – orange slices, satsumas/clementines, carrot sticks, orange peppers, peaches, nectarines, apricots, mangos.

**What makes these good?** The plant chemicals in orange foods support immunity, maintain good vision, healthy skin, and strong teeth and bones.

**Message for children** – Eating orange foods will help you have glowing skin and healthy eyes.

### Yellow

**Foods to try** – yellow peppers, bananas, baby sweetcorn, pineapples.

**What makes these good?** The plant chemicals in yellow foods support the immune system and maintain good vision.

**Message for children** – These are great for your eyes and helping your body fight germs.

### Green

**Foods to try** – apples, pears, grapes, cucumber sticks, green peppers, kiwis, broccoli heads, celery, avocados.

**What makes these good?** The plant chemicals in green foods support the immune system, are powerful antioxidants, and help maintain good vision.

**Message for children** – Green foods help make and keep your bones and teeth strong, and help keep your brain healthy.

### Blue/indigo/violet

**Foods to try** – blueberries, blackberries, grapes, plums.

**What makes these good?** The plant chemicals in blue/indigo/violet foods support blood pressure control, reduce the risk of diabetes, are powerful antioxidants and may help to slow some of the effects of ageing.

**Message for children** – These will help you have a healthy brain and heart.

Making it fun by offering children a 'rainbow' of different-coloured foods may help increase their consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables. It may also help to reduce their intake of foods that are higher in refined carbohydrates; this will help control the release of sugar into the bloodstream. Maintaining stable blood sugar levels can have a huge influence over energy levels, behaviour and concentration. It's also worth noting that dried fruit, which has no water content, is very high in sugar and can have a significant impact on blood sugar. The effect of ten raisins is equivalent to that of a punnet of strawberries, so when planning snack rainbows, keep dried fruit consumption to a minimum.



Protein is also key to slowing down that release of sugar and is vital for your child's growth and repair. Here are some examples of foods containing protein that you can combine with carbohydrates into a rainbow of snacks for your child.

CARBOHYDRATE		PROTEIN
Apples	+	Cheese
Grapes	+	Seeds (pumpkin, sunflower)
Rice cakes	+	Cottage cheese
Cucumbers, carrot sticks	+	Hummus
Berries	+	Yoghurt
Oatcakes, plums	+	Cream cheese

Plan to give your child a daily rainbow of foods as this is important for their health and to develop their experience of different foods and flavours. Be aware also of the need to balance carbohydrates and proteins. This can make a huge impact on a child's behaviour, mood and concentration. Noting down any differences you see can help you to measure the significance of the changes you have made.

#### About the author:

The Food Teacher, Katharine Tate, has worked as a teacher and education consultant internationally in primary and secondary schools for over 20 years. Qualified as a registered nutritional therapist, Katharine combines her unique education and nutrition expertise to offer schools, organisations and families advice, education programmes, practical workshops, and individual/family consultations.

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