

3 Tips for Navigating Treats with Kids

Expert Advice from a Registered Dietitian

We asked registered dietitian and mother of three, Dr. Katie Loth, for her advice for managing treats with kids.

Tip #1

No Good or Bad Foods

I encourage parents to adopt a philosophy where no food is inherently “good” or “bad.” This approach may differ from how many of us were raised, but it can make navigating treats at home much easier. By shifting away from labeling foods as “good” or “bad,” we can focus more on moderation and fostering a positive relationship with food.



A key principle I recommend is normalizing treats without attaching guilt:

- ♥ It's OK to eat treats and we don't need to feel guilty about it when we do it.
- ♥ We don't need to feel bad after we eat one.
- ♥ We don't need to do anything to earn a treat.
- ♥ It's OK to enjoy the way that treats taste and the way that they make us feel.



Tip #2

Balance, Not Restriction

Along with that philosophy, is the importance of focusing on balance and not restriction.



BIG IDEA

How can we help balance the treats that we're eating with other different types of foods versus restricting the treat itself?

That can be a slight shift, but it can make a really big difference.

Shift from Focusing On

Treats are something...

- we get once in a while
- we shouldn't have more of
- we shouldn't be thinking about

to

How does this fit within the context of all the other things that we're eating?

Tip #3

Encourage Intuitive Eating

I encourage parents to begin conversations with their children about the concept of intuitive eating. While this can be challenging with younger kids, starting with simple questions during mealtimes can be a helpful approach:

- ✱ How are you feeling?
- ✱ Is your stomach still hungry?
- ✱ Are you getting full?

These conversations can take place at any time, not just when treats are involved. The goal is to help kids begin thinking about the reasons behind why we eat.



“We eat when we’re hungry and we also eat sometimes because it tastes good, and we enjoy it. Both of those things are OK. We also want to be in tune with how hungry we are when we’re choosing to eat something and let that be one of the things at the forefront of what guides us as we make decisions about what we eat.”



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