WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

MESSAGING & BEHAVIOR

- Using food as a reward, even healthy food, encourages children to eat outside of meal and snack times when they may not be hungry and can lead to poor nutritional habits.1,6

- Talking to children about good nutrition while at the same time rewarding their behavior with unhealthy foods sends a mixed message that can interfere with healthy choices.6

UNHEALTHY FOODS

- Children are commonly offered unhealthy food items like candy, cookies, sugary drinks, or pizza as a reward for good behavior or academic performance, a practice that increases their risk for overweight and obesity.1-5

- Foods used as rewards tend to be high in sugar, fat, and salt, and can help create unhealthy taste preferences that last into adulthood1,3,6. Rewarding children with food can also hurt the quality of their diet in the short term.1-5

References
1. Puhl RM, Schwartz MB. If you are good you can have a cookie: How memories of childhood food rules link to adult eating behaviors. *Eat Behav.* 2003;4(3):283-293.

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