

# Healthy Snacks for Healthy Spirits, Minds and Bodies

**Snacks are a bigger part of kids' diets than in the past. Snacks can make positive or negative contributions to kids' diets—depending on the choices we offer. Below are ideas for healthy drinks and snacks for teachers, caregivers, children's programs and parents to serve to children in the classroom, in afterschool programs, at soccer games, home and elsewhere.**

## HEALTHY SNACKS FOR CHILDREN

Serving healthy snacks to our children is important to providing good nutrition for growth and development, supporting lifelong healthy eating habits, and preventing costly and potentially disabling diseases, like heart disease, cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity.

- **Fruits and Vegetables**—Almost all of the snacks served to children should be fruits or vegetables. Do taste tests or let kids choose (or vote for) new fruits and vegetables to try. Fruit can be served whole, sliced, cut in half, cubed or in wedges. Canned, frozen and dried fruits are easy and usually need little preparation. Healthy options include: fresh fruits and vegetables; frozen fruit; applesauce; fruit cups or canned fruit (in juice or light syrup); dried fruit and fruit leathers (without added sugars); fruit salad; fruit juice popsicles; and homemade smoothies. Vegetables can be served with dips like hummus, bean dip or salad dressing; in salads; or as veggie pockets in whole wheat pitas.
- **Healthy Grains (whole grains that are low in fats and sugars)**—Serve mostly whole grains, which provide more fiber, vitamins and minerals than refined grains. (Whole wheat or other whole grain should be the first ingredient listed). Healthy whole grain options include: English muffins, pita or tortillas; breakfast cereal; crackers; rice cakes; popcorn; tortilla chips; granola; cereal bars; breadsticks or flatbreads. Refined grains, such as pretzels and goldfish, should not be everyday offerings. Be sure to read nutrition labels to pick options that are low in sugars, saturated fat and trans fat.
- **Low-Fat Dairy Foods**—To protect children's bones and hearts, make sure all dairy foods are low-fat or fat-free, such as yogurt and low-fat pudding. Since cheese is the number two source of heart-damaging saturated fat in children's diets, choose lower-fat cheeses, serve small portions and serve cheese with other foods like fruit, vegetables or whole grain crackers.
- **Nuts and Trail Mix**—Since nuts are high in calories, it is best to serve small portions (a small handful) and serve them along with another snack, such as fruit.

## HEALTHY BEVERAGES

- **Water should be the main drink served to kids at snack times**—Water satisfies thirst without adding calories or sugars (and it is low-cost!).
- **Seltzer or sparkling water**—Look for calorie-free varieties, flavored or unflavored.
- **Low-fat and fat-free milk**—Milk is a terrific source of calcium and vitamin D, but it also is the number one source of heart-damaging saturated fat in children's diets. Choose fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) instead of whole or 2% (reduced-fat) milk. Soy and rice "milks" (fortified with calcium and vitamin D) also are healthy options.

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- **Fruit juice**—Choose only 100% fruit juice, but limit juice to no more than six ounces (a little less than a cup) for 1-6 year olds and no more than 12 ounces (1½ cups) for 7-18 year olds. Avoid juice drinks, which, nutritionally, are no better than soda pop. The label should say 100% juice. Avoid drinks with sugar or high fructose corn syrup in the ingredient list.

Adapted from: Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2005. For a detailed list of healthy snack ideas, visit [www.cspinet.org/healthysnacks](http://www.cspinet.org/healthysnacks).