

Tips for Helping your Kids Eat Healthy

Be Constructive

Let kids construct their own snacks. You'll keep them occupied *and* they might be more likely to sample whatever nutritious foods they're working with.

- **Fruit Kabobs:** Stick melon balls, berries, pineapple chunks, and cubed peaches, pears or apples onto frilled toothpicks.
- **Mini Sandwiches:** Use crackers or cut-up bread--or give the kids a few slices of bread, lunch meat, and cheese, and a couple of miniature cookie cutters to make tiny, fun-shaped sandwiches.
- **Pizza:** Who can resist pizza? Pizza can be a perfectly healthy snack. Use half an English muffin, a whole pita, or a tortilla as a pizza crust. Let them smear on a bit of bottled tomato sauce, add a light sprinkle of low-fat mozzarella cheese, and then top with chopped vegetables and maybe a bit of lean meat. Heat for a few minutes in the toaster oven or microwave, then cut into triangles for extra kid-appeal.

Freeze!

We usually equate frozen snacks with special treats, like ice cream and snow cones. Take advantage of that association: frozen grapes are cool like popsicles and sweet like candy, but they've got plenty of vitamins and fiber too. Peel and freeze bananas, then roll the frozen fruit in chocolate syrup and chopped nuts. Other favorites include peach and nectarine slices, and berries of all kinds. Turn any combination of frozen fruit, milk, yogurt, juice and ice into a delicious, nutritious "milkshake."

Substitute!

Even traditional desserts can become healthy, well-balanced snacks.

- Make cookies and muffins with applesauce in place of some of the fat, and add oats, dried fruit, nuts and whole wheat flour.
- Achieve the cool, creamy deliciousness of ice cream with low fat frozen yogurt, or pudding made with nonfat milk and frozen into pops.
- Top a big, fluffy slice of angel food cake with fresh fruit to add vitamins and fiber, or cut it into cubes for dipping into fruit-flavored yogurt for an extra dose of calcium.

Establish a Snacking Zone

When hungry kids burst through the front door after school, they grab whatever is easy and available. So it's best to have a few things prepared in advance. Designate one shelf of the refrigerator and/or pantry as the "snack shelf," with the understanding that anything that's on that shelf is okay to eat without having to ask permission first. Then, stock the shelf with several choices--a little healthy variety to hold the kids' interest and keep you from worrying about them overloading on junk.

Extracurricular activities keep some kids at school throughout the afternoon. Fruit, vegetable sticks, crackers, cheese, granola bars, healthy cookies, and muffins, and peanut butter sandwiches are all high-energy foods that hold up well in a locker until your hungry kid is ready for a homemade pick-me-up. Homemade munchies also helps them avoid the sugar and fat-laden

temptation of the vending machine or convenience store.