

Easy & Healthy Snacks for Kids by Heather Grocott

It seems impossible at times to plan and pack healthy snacks for our kids. It is so much easier to just throw in a bag of crackers, right? Our lives are so busy with packed schedules full of soccer game practices, dance recitals, family gatherings, and appointments, it is a struggle to get dinner on the table, let alone remember healthy snacks for our kids! So, what is the best way to prepare healthy snacks for your kids? Here are some rules to live by:

RULE #1: Prepare snacks when you prepare dinner. This will save you time in the long run, and allow you to multi-task. You are already in your kitchen, why plan another time of day to make snacks?

Mix leftover vegetables with whole grain rice in a thermos for lunch the next day!

Make veggie wraps the day before instead of sandwiches on bulky bread with processed meats.

RULE #2: Try to involve your children in preparing their own healthy snacks – if they are part of the preparation, they will be much more likely to eat it!

Make a trail mix with your kids! Instead of chocolate chips, use raisins! Instead of pretzels or crackers, substitute with whole grain cereal or granola.

Use cookie cutters to cut cheese into fun shapes!

RULE #3: Remember to KISS → Keep It Simple, Silly!

Pack fruits that do not require much prep or maintenance such as apples, bananas, berries, pears, peaches, plums, and nectarines

RULE #4: Give them what they want → There are certain foods kids just love, but are not so good for their precious little bodies. Try these tips:

FOR CRUNCH: *Pack small reusable containers of granola or celery sticks. Baked tortilla chips or pita chips are also a nice alternative.*

FOR SWEETNESS: *Try natural fruits like pineapple to cure your child's sweet tooth. Dried cranberries also do the trick, too!*

FOR the PB&J lover: *Substitute peanut butter with all-natural sunflower butter – it is packed with OMEGA 3’s and tastes just as good as peanut butter. Substitute jelly with an all-natural apple or other fruit spread.*

CHEESE PLEASE: *Make cheese interesting to your kids. Instead of paring it with salty crackers, make kabobs with fruit. Easy to pack into a school lunch!*

RULE #5: Take a dip, let them play!

Let’s face it, kids love to play with their food. So, make fruits and veggies interesting. Pack a back of not only just celery sticks, but a variety such as carrot sticks, cucumbers, bell peppers, cherry tomatoes, and sugar snap peas. If there is low fat dip to accompany these colorful treats, they are sure to disappear in no time!

Additional ideas for healthy easy snacks:

<i>Instead of ...</i>	<i>Try This...</i>
Cookies	Whole grain granola bar with a glass of milk
Potato Chips	Whole grain cereal mixed with raisins and salt-free nuts to make trail mix
Ice cream	Yogurt with fresh fruit
Soda	Water with lemon or lime
Cake	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.
French fries	Microwave a small backed potato. Top with salsa and/or low fat cheese.
Milk shakes	Blend low-fat milk, frozen strawberries and a banana for thirty seconds for a delicious smoothie.

For more ideas, visit www.mypyramid.gov