

This information obtained from the Center Science in the Public Interest website. You can visit it at <https://cspinet.org/>

Here is a list of healthful snacks that may be used at home or in the classroom.

Fruit is naturally sweet, so most kids love it. Fruit can be served whole, sliced, cut in half, cubed, or in wedges. Canned, frozen, and dried fruits often need little preparation.

- Apples (it can be helpful to use an apple corer)
- Apricots
- Bananas
- Blackberries
- Blueberries
- Cantaloupe
- Cherries
- Clementine's
- Grapefruit
- Grapes (red, green, or purple)
- Honeydew Melon
- Kiwis (cut in half and give each child a spoon to eat it)
- Mangoes
- Nectarines
- Oranges
- Peaches
- Pears
- Pineapple
- Plums
- Strawberries
- Tangerines
- Watermelon

**Applesauce (Unsweetened), Fruit Cups, and Canned Fruit.** These have a long shelf life and are low-cost, easy, and healthy if canned in juice or light syrup. One example of unsweetened applesauce is Mott's Unsweetened Apple. Dole and Del Monte offer a variety of single-serve fruit bowls.

**Dried Fruit.** Try raisins, apricots, apples, cranberries, pineapple, papaya, and others with little or no added sugars.

**Frozen Fruit.** Try freezing grapes or buy frozen blueberries, strawberries, peaches, and mangoes.

**Fruit Leathers.** Some brands of fruit snacks are more like candy than fruit, and should be avoided due to their high content of added sugars and lack of fruit. Brands to *avoid* include Fruit Rollups, Farley's Fruit Snacks, Sunkist Fruit Gems, Starburst Fruit Chews, Mamba Fruit Chews, Jolly Rancher Fruit Chews, and Original Fruit Skittles. Try Natural Value Fruit Leathers and Stretch Island Fruit Leathers, which come in a variety of flavors and don't have added sugars.

**Fruit Salad.** Get kids to help make a fruit salad. Use a variety of colorful fruits to add to the appeal.

**Smoothies.** Blend fruit with juice, yogurt or milk, and ice. Many store-made smoothies have added sugars and are not healthy choices.

**Deliveries.** Deliveries of fresh fruit or platters of cut-up fruit are a convenient option offered by some local grocery stores.

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## Vegetables

Vegetables can be served raw with hummus, dip or salad dressing:

- Broccoli
- Carrot sticks or Baby Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Celery Sticks
- Cucumber
- Peppers (green, red, or yellow)
- Snap Peas
- Snow Peas
- String Beans
- Tomato slices or grape or cherry tomatoes
- Yellow Summer Squash slices
- Zucchini slices

**Dips.** Try low-fat salad dressings, like fat-free Ranch or Thousand Island, store-bought light dips, hummus (which comes in dozens of flavors), bean dips, guacamole, salsa, or peanut butter.

**Salad.** Make a salad or set out veggies like a salad bar and let the kids build their own salads.

**Soy.** Edamame (pronounced “eh-dah-MAH-may”) are fun to eat and easy to serve. (Heat frozen edamame in the microwave for about 2-3 minutes).

**Veggie Pockets.** Cut whole wheat pitas in half and let kids add veggies with hummus, bean dip, or dressing.

**Ants on a Log.** Let kids spread peanut butter on celery (with a plastic knife) and add raisins.

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## Healthy Grains (bread, crackers, cereals, etc.)

Though most kids eat plenty of grain products, too many of those grains are cookies, snack cakes, sugary cereals, and other refined grains that are high in sugars or saturated fat. Try to serve mostly whole grains, which provide more fiber, vitamins, and minerals than refined grains. In addition, try to limit added sugars to less than 35% by weight<sup>1,2</sup> eliminate trans fats, and keep the saturated and trans fat low.

**Note: Cookies, snack cakes, and chips should be saved for occasional treats, given their poor nutritional quality.**

**Whole Wheat English Muffins, Pita, or Tortillas.** Stuff them with veggies or dip them in hummus or bean dip.

**Breakfast Cereal.** Either dry or with low-fat milk, *whole* grain cereals like Cheerios, Grape-Nuts, Raisin Bran, Mini Wheats, and Wheaties make good snacks. Look for cereals with no more than 6g of sugars per serving. Here are some recommendations for buying breakfast cereal.

**Crackers.** Whole-grain crackers like Triscuits, which come in different flavors or thin crisps (or similar woven wheat crackers), Kalvi Rye crackers, or whole wheat Matzos can be served alone or with toppings, like low-fat cheese, peanut butter, or low-fat, reduced-sodium luncheon meat.

**Rice Cakes.** Look for rice cakes made from brown (whole grain) rice. They come in many flavors and can be served with or without toppings.

**Popcorn.** Look for low-fat popcorn in a bag or microwave popcorn. Or you can air pop the popcorn and season it, *e.g.*, by spraying it with vegetable oil spray and adding parmesan cheese, garlic powder, or other non-salt spices.

**Granola and Cereal Bars.** Look for whole grain granola bars that are low in sugars and moderate in calories, like Barbara’s Granola Bars (cinnamon raisin, oats and honey, and carob chip flavors), Nature Valley Crunchy Granola Bars (cinnamon, oats ‘n honey, maple brown sugar, and peanut butter flavors), Nature Valley Chewy Trail Mix Bars (fruit and nut flavor), and Quaker Chewy Granola Bar (peanut butter and chocolate chunk flavor). Check out more products [here](#).

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## Low-Fat Dairy Foods

Dairy foods are a great source of calcium, which can help to build strong bones. However, dairy products also are the biggest sources of artery-clogging saturated fat in kids’ diets. To protect children’s bones and hearts, make sure all dairy foods served are low-fat or fat-free.

**Yogurt.** Look for brands that are low-fat or fat-free, moderate in sugars (no more than about 30 grams of sugars in a 6-oz. cup), and high in calcium (at least 25% of daily value [DV] for calcium in a 6-oz. cup). Examples include Danimals Drinkable Low-Fat Yogurt, Go-Gurt by Yoplait, or cups of low-fat or non-fat yogurt from Stonyfield Farm, Dannon, Horizon, and similar store brands. Low-fat or non-fat yogurt also can be served with fresh or frozen fruit or low-fat granola.

**Low-Fat Cheese.** Cheese provides calcium, but usually its saturated fat price tag is too high. Cheese is the number two source of heart-damaging saturated fat in children's diets. Even with low-fat and reduced-fat cheese, be sure to serve with other foods like fruit, vegetables, or whole grain crackers. Choose reduced-fat cheeses like Trader Joe's Armenian Style Braided; Borden or Sargento Light Mozzarella string cheese; Frigo Light Cheese Heads; Kraft Twist-Ums; Polly-O Twisterellas; the Laughing Cow's Light Original Mini Babybel; or Cabot 50% Light Vermont Cheddar.

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## **Other Snack Ideas**

**Nuts.** Nuts are a healthy choice, but since nuts are calorie dense, it is best to serve them along with another snack such as fruit. A small handful of nuts is a reasonable serving size. Examples include peanuts, pistachios, almonds, walnuts, cashews, or soy nuts.

**WARNING: A small but growing number of kids have severe peanut and/or tree nut allergies. Before bringing in peanuts, peanut butter, or other nuts as a snack, check to make sure none of the children have an allergy.**

**Trail Mix.** Trail mixes are easy to make and store well in a sealed container. Items to include: low-fat granola, whole grain cereals, peanuts, cashews, almonds, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, and dried fruits like raisins, apricots, apples, pineapple, or cranberries.

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## Healthy Beverages

**Water.** Water should be the main drink served to kids at snack times. Water satisfies thirst and does not have sugar or calories. (Plus, it is low-cost for care-givers!) If kids are used to getting sweetened beverages or juice at snack times, it may take a little time for them to get used to drinking water.

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**Seltzer.** Carbonated drinks like seltzer, sparkling water, and club soda are healthy options. They do not contain the sugars, calories, and caffeine of sodas. For an occasional treat, mix them with equal amounts of 100% fruit juice.

**Low-Fat and Fat-Free Milk.** Milk provides key nutrients, such as calcium and vitamin D. Choose fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk to avoid the heart-damaging saturated fat found in whole and 2% (reduced-fat) milk. Healthy Eating Research recommends only unflavored milk, especially for children ages 2-4. Flavored milk should have no more than 130 calories per 8-ounce serving to help limit calories and added sugars. Single-serve containers of chocolate or other flavored whole or 2% milk drinks can be too high in calories (400-550 calories) and saturated fat (1/3 of a day's worth) to be a healthy beverage for kids.

**Soy and Rice Drinks.** For children who prefer not to drink cow's milk, calcium-fortified soy drinks are good choices.

**Fruit Juice.** Avoid the added sugars of juice drinks, punches, fruit cocktail drinks, or lemonade. Many beverages like Capri Sun, V8-Splash, Tropicana Twisters, Sunny Delight, Kool Aid Jammers, Hi-C, or juice drinks from Very Fine, Welch's or Snapple are easily mistaken for juice. However, those beverages are more like soda than juice – they are merely sugar water with a few tablespoons of added juice.

Serving whole fruit is more nutritious than fruit juice. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children ages 1-6 years old drink no more than 6 ounces (one serving) of juice a day and children ages 7-18 years old drink no more than 12 ounces (two servings) of juice a day.

**A note about sugary soft drinks (soda, sweetened tea, lemonade, and juice drinks): Children who drink more sweetened drinks consume more calories and are more likely to be overweight than kids who drink fewer soft drinks. Soft drinks also displace healthful foods in kids' diets like milk, which can help prevent osteoporosis, and 100% juice, which can help prevent heart disease and cancer. In addition, soda pop can cause dental cavities and tooth decay.**

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