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EXTENSION

Family Matters

Improving Health Together

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A New Year, A New Look at Snacking

By Joy Akey, CSU Extension Specialist, Yuma County

The word “snack” often suggests sweet or salty things like cookies, chips, candy, or snack bars. This new year give your family’s snacks a different look by focusing on healthy and satisfying alternatives that supply important nutrients without a lot of added sugar and salt.



Snacks can be a very beneficial way for everyone, especially children and teenagers, to get the amount of daily nutrients needed. For example, snacks for children provide about a quarter of their food intake. Snacks can also be a terrific way to stay energized and satisfy hunger between meals. Choices matter, so consider them as an important part of a daily diet. Regularly offer healthy foods such as carrot sticks, sliced fruit, low-fat cheese sticks, boiled eggs, whole grain crackers, nuts and milk. Foods and drinks high in fat, sugar, and sodium and low in nutritional value should be limited to once or twice a week.



Children’s eating habits develop at an early age. Learning to make wise choices now will benefit their eating behaviors and health in the future. Consuming nutritious foods now can help reduce their risk for diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and osteoporosis. Start the new year with a new look at snacks to benefit your whole family!

Snack Tips:

- Remember children model their parents, teachers, and other children. If you are choosing and eating healthy foods, they will too.
- Present food in an appealing way. If food does not look fresh, colorful, etc., it is not appealing to eat no matter our age.
- Enjoy a variety of textures and flavors – crunchy, soft, chewy, smooth, hot, cold, sweet, sour, bland, spicy.
- Offer snacks at regular times so children are not grazing throughout the day.
- Avoid using food as a reward for good behavior.
- When possible, avoid high sugar, fatty and salty snacks, and caffeine-containing beverages.
- Try making your own snacks instead of relying on store bought snacks. Homemade snacks can be healthier, less costly and eliminate extra packaging and waste.
- Plan and prepare extra servings at mealtimes for snacks later – cold chicken, cups of soup, fruit salad.

Helping families increase physical activity and enjoy healthy foods ...

Let's Talk

Make snack time fun by letting your kids help pick and prepare snacks! When kids help make their own food, they're more excited to try new things. Explain that fruits and veggies are full of vitamins and minerals that help them grow strong and stay healthy.

- Children love to dip!
 - Instead of Ranch dressing make a healthy vegetable dip with plain yogurt and Ranch dressing mix.
 - Use vanilla yogurt as a dip for fruit.
 - Try cheese sauce or hummus as a dip for cut vegetables, pretzels or whole grain crackers.
- Let youngsters help pick out fruits, vegetables, and other healthy options when shopping; they will be more willing to eat them.
- Have a "snack spot" in the refrigerator or cupboard with nutritious, ready-to-eat snacks for everyone to enjoy. Stock cut fruit, veggies, cheese sticks and yogurt in the fridge. Keep nuts, seeds, and whole grain snacks in the cupboard.
- Have fun inventing your own smoothies. Be creative and try adding fresh spinach, ground flax seed, nut butter, grated carrot or canned pumpkin for a different twist.

Recipe for Health

Pumpkin Yogurt Dip

Ingredients:

- 15 oz. canned pumpkin puree
- 1 cup yogurt (plain, vanilla, or flavor of choice)
- 4 oz. low-fat cream cheese or Neufchatel cheese
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 Tbsp honey (less if you are using vanilla or another sweetened flavored yogurt)
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- ¼ tsp ginger
- ¼ tsp nutmeg
- ¼ tsp allspice

Directions:

1. Wash hands and food contact surfaces with soap and water.
2. Mix all ingredients together using either a food processor or a hand mixer.
3. Cover and keep refrigerated until ready to serve.
4. Pair with your favorite dippers such as apple or pear slices.



For more information, ideas and recipes visit the Colorado State University Food Smart website at: foodsmartcolorado.colostate.edu