

# Healthy Snacks

Teens love to snack! When your child is hungry between meals, encourage her to grab healthy foods that will boost her energy, add important nutrients to her diet, and help her concentrate in school. Use these ideas for healthier snacking at home or on the go.

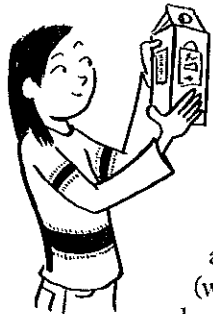


## Stocking up

“There’s nothing in the house to eat!”

How many times have you heard that? Take your teen or tween shopping to pick out healthy snacks. If she has a hand in selecting items, she’ll be more apt to find something she likes at snack time.

● As you shop, get your child used to reading food labels. Suggest that she look for items



that are higher in fiber and vitamins and lower in fat, sodium, and sugar.

● Have her compare different brands of the same food—she may be surprised by the differences. The same type of canned soup, for example, can vary widely in sodium content. Finally, steer her away from foods with trans fats and hard-to-pronounce words (which are most likely chemicals).

● Make it more convenient to find nutritious snacks in the refrigerator by putting them at the front of the middle shelves. For example, keep fat-free milk, 100% juice, and flavored seltzer water at the front of your beverage shelf. You might put low-fat yogurt and leftovers from last night’s dinner on the shelf above. If your refrigerator has a pull-out snack drawer, that’s a good place for lean deli meats and reduced-fat cheeses.

● Put snacks like whole-grain crackers, almonds, or pretzels on a pantry shelf at eye level. To control portions, divide snacks into individual servings in zipper bags—when kids (or adults) eat directly from a package, they tend to overeat. Even better, ask your teen to help you bag the snacks so he sees what a healthy serving size looks like. He can check the nutrition label to find the size of one serving.

Shopping List	
•	fresh fruits and vegetables
•	whole-wheat crackers, waffles, and cereals
•	low-fat cheese like Colby, Monterey Jack, and string cheese
•	peanut or sunflower butter
•	fruit spread (no sugar added)
•	dry-roasted nuts
•	fat-free milk
•	flavored yogurt (non-fat, low-fat)
•	unsalted pretzels
•	graham crackers
•	whole-grain breads (sandwich, English muffins, tortillas, pitas)
•	lean deli meats (turkey, ham, roast beef)
•	canned tuna packed in water, light mayonnaise
•	low-fat pudding
•	all-fruit freezer pops

● Healthy snacks can be found throughout the grocery store. But a good rule of thumb is to concentrate on the outer aisles—that’s where the fresh produce, dairy products, and meats are usually located. Then, fill in with healthier canned and packaged items.

## Ready to eat

When your teen comes in the door from school or activities, he’s probably famished. Make it easier for him to grab healthy snacks by keeping them where he can see them.

● Have a bowl of fresh fruit on the counter or as a centerpiece on your kitchen table. To keep your child interested, rotate what’s in the bowl. For instance, you might have Granny Smith apples, bananas, and dates one week, and bananas, kiwi, and peaches another week.



continued

## Teen-friendly snacks

Variety keeps healthy snacks appetizing. Give your teen fresh ideas like these for snacks she can prepare herself.

- Oatmeal: It's not just for breakfast. Top with blueberries, chopped walnuts, or dried cherries—or all three!
- Sprinkle grated cheddar cheese over a corn tortilla. Fold in half, microwave for 20 seconds, and eat with salsa.
- Fill a waffle cone with cut-up fruit and low-fat vanilla yogurt.
- Combine nuts and dried fruits into a trail mix. *Example:* almonds, sunflower seeds, dried cranberries, dried apples.
- Make “applesauce pops.” Put applesauce in paper cups, and cover with foil. Cut a slit in the center of the foil, and insert a wooden stick. Freeze until firm. To eat, peel off the foil and cup. *Tip:* Puree fresh or frozen berries in a blender, and stir into the applesauce before freezing.
- Peel a banana, and coat with yogurt. Roll in crushed whole-grain cereal, and freeze.



- Top a toasted whole-wheat waffle with low-fat yogurt and blueberries.
- Make “ants on a log” by spreading celery sticks with low-fat cream cheese. Top with raisins.
- Sprinkle 3 tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese on 3 cups air-popped popcorn.
- Snack in a glass: Combine favorite fruits and yogurt in a blender, and puree until smooth. For instance, blend a banana, ½ cup orange juice, ½ cup fat-free vanilla yogurt, and 2–3 small ice cubes.

## Out and about

Teens do a lot of their snacking away from home. Encourage your child to make healthy choices with these suggestions.

- Look for healthier items in vending machines. Some machines have fresh fruit, cereal bars, and baked crackers, for instance. And your teen is likely to find bottled water in machines at school, community centers, or sporting events.

## Dip it!

Dipping makes snacks more fun. For healthy combinations, suggest that your child dip:

- baby carrots, red and green bell pepper slices, and grape tomatoes in low-fat salad dressing
- pretzels in yogurt
- pita chips in hummus
- animal crackers in low-fat pudding
- bread sticks in salsa
- graham crackers in applesauce

*Idea:* For a healthy vegetable dip, reduce the fat in creamy salad dressing by adding 1 to 2 tbsp. low-fat plain yogurt to 3 tbsp. bottled ranch dressing.

- At a snack bar, he might choose an unsalted pretzel with mustard or one slice of cheese pizza. Water is a better choice than soda or a sports drink. *Tip:* For a community event, encourage your child to take a healthy snack from home so he's not tempted by the snack bar food.

- It's not easy to find healthy snacks at a movie theater. Suggest that your teenager eat something before he goes—that way, he won't be starving when he gets there. Then, he can drink water rather than soda and get a small bag of popcorn with no added butter or salt.

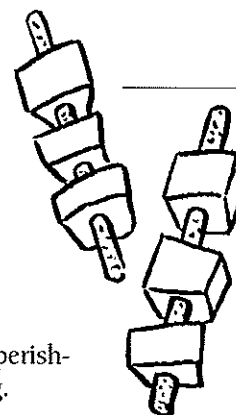
## Quick snacks to pack

When your busy teen is on the go, help him avoid sugary and high-fat choices with take-along snacks like these:

- Make sandwiches such as lean ham and mustard on rye bread or cream cheese and olives on a whole-grain dinner roll.
- Cut oranges into quarters, or take along tangerines or clementines (they can be peeled easily).
- Spread mustard on a slice of turkey, and wrap around a sesame stick for an inside-out sandwich.

- Bag up carrot and celery sticks or broccoli and cauliflower florets.
- Buy individual cups of fruit (mandarin oranges, peaches, pears) packed in their own juice.
- Put cubes of low-fat cheese on pretzel sticks for a “snack kabob.”

*Note:* Pack meats, cheeses, and other perishable foods in a cooler or an insulated bag.



*Editor's Note:* Teen Food & Fitness™ is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.