

Smart Fruit and Veggie Snacks

You probably already know fruits and vegetables are good for health. However, you may not know just how good produce is for your kids. Naturally nutrient-rich and mostly fat-free, fruit and veggie snacks help children close critical nutrient gaps without adding extra calories.

Produce helps kids get the potassium, magnesium and fiber most American youth are missing. Fruit and vegetables are also rich sources of the antioxidants that help in the prevention of cancer, diabetes and heart disease. For children and adults alike, eating more fruit and vegetable snacks is one of the smartest food moves you can make.

Place Fresh Produce in Sight

It's no secret fresh fruit and vegetables provide a nutrition boost for everyone in your family. But, how do you get kids to eat more for snacks?

The answer is in plain sight. That's right; just keep bright, colorful produce where everyone can easily see it. Keep something for a snack-on-the-run. Keep a bowl of fresh, just ripe whole fruit in the center of your kitchen dining table. Keep small bags of fresh veggie snacks (carrots, celery sticks and broccoli florets) at eye level in the fridge.

Try Dried Variations

Dried fruit is the perfect snack for on-the-go kids. It doesn't need refrigeration and it never makes a mess in backpacks. Choose dried fruit with little or no added sugar: apples, apricots, blueberries and raisins are often dried with just their own natural sweetness. Add dried fruit to trail mix or to fresh fruit salads for a splash of color and a healthy dose of nutrients. Dried beans and peas count as vegetables. Look for crunchy dried soybean, pea and chickpea snacks.

Stock Your Pantry with Canned Choices

Canned fruits make appealing, quick and inexpensive snacks. Enjoy fruits canned in juice or, like nectar, applesauce, made without added sugar. Divide larger cans into smaller portions in reusable plastic containers or buy the convenient single-serve containers of canned fruits, such as mandarin orange segments, pineapple chunks and applesauce.

Convenient, inexpensive and packed with nutrition, canned beans make zesty snack dips when mixed with other vegetables, such as canned corn and spicy salsa.

Cut Costs with Frozen Options

Frozen fruits are often less expensive but just as nutritious as the fresh varieties. Purchase frozen strawberries, raspberries and blueberries in large bags; then use small handfuls for yogurt toppings or smoothie ingredients. Kids love frozen bars made from 100 percent fruit and juice (buy commercial or make-your-own) as a sweet and refreshing treat on hot days. Like their canned cousins, frozen vegetables are delicious. Try microwaving quickly and adding to bean and salsa dip combinations.