

Tips to Encourage Kids to Eat Healthy Snacks at Parties

With Halloween right around the corner, now is a great time to think about serving healthy snacks at your upcoming holiday celebrations to encourage good health for the children in your care. Eating healthy and being physically active are necessary pieces of holiday celebrations. Also, remember that snacking is an important part of a child's day. Their bodies need refueling with healthy foods to keep them energized through the day. Utilizing snack time to include nutritious foods from MyPlate's food groups is a great way to plan snacks, even during a celebration. During snack time, plan to include food items from two or three food groups.

There are many great ideas to include more healthy treats and fewer non-healthy treats for celebrations and parties. Begin with a plan for the party and include the children in helping you make choices about what will be served and what activities you will do. To assist parents who will be sending items in from home, consider creating a menu or food list of items you would like brought in and have parents sign up for what item they will bring. Your goal does not have to be cutting out all treats, but to make sure they are eaten in moderation and do not become the focus of parties or celebrations. The focus should be on fun and physical activity, not food. The list below provides some healthy suggestions for celebrations. Some healthier food items to consider are 100 percent juice, 100 percent fruit juice freezer pops, trail mix, fruit or vegetables, popcorn (minimal salt and butter), dried fruits, low-fat yogurt products, fruit leather, string cheese or pretzel products.

You could also plan to prepare a snack food item with the children during the party and could request parents send in the ingredients. For example, to make and serve yogurt parfait, you could request parents send in yogurt, different kinds of cut fruit, granola or cups. Feel free to divide the ingredient list amongst multiple people.

More fun food tips for your celebrations

- Make food look festive! Sprinkle coconut, sliced almonds, green onions or herbs on food.
- Decorate foods so they look interesting and appealing.
- Use new shapes for sandwiches, vegetables, and fruits (for example, by using cookie cutters).
- Make your own mini sweet treats. Offer kid sized two-bite treats, mini cupcakes, or frozen fruit popsicles.

There is also a wide variety of creative ideas for non-food treats to consider sharing with parents. They may choose to send in items like party hats, decorative pencils or plastic rings.

Lastly, don't forget to add some fun, physical activity to your celebration. Get kids moving and keep them moving all throughout the party, start a conga line, do the limbo, take a walk, bounce a balloon and then dance. Find activities that fit your space, the weather and ages of the children in your care.