

# Healthy School Snacks



Children need snacks to keep their busy bodies and minds going. Healthy snacking can help kids get important nutrients, make up for skipped meals and provide necessary fuel for learning, sports and other activities. Eating small, well-balanced snacks between meals can also keep kids from eating too much at mealtimes.<sup>1</sup> Many kids bring snacks to school, and sometimes school programs, school staff or other parents provide snacks for students to share. Making those snacks as nutritious as possible is important for student performance and the development of healthy eating habits.

## Promoting Healthier Snacks at School

- Ask teachers to make a point of eating healthy snacks in front of the kids and to talk about how they feel better, stronger and smarter when eating this way.
- Seek community partners and funding opportunities that could help your school provide healthy snacks. If your school has a high free and reduced lunch population, it may be easier to set up these types of partnerships.
- Volunteer to make a classroom chart that tracks when kids bring in fresh fruits and veggies for a snack. Consider offering a non-food reward when students reach certain milestones.
- Ask teachers or other school staff if you can conduct periodic taste tests of healthy snack items in the classroom, in the cafeteria or elsewhere. If children try something and like it, they're more likely to ask their parents if they can have it at home.
- Ask if the school can put a big fruit bowl (instead of candy) in the front office, available for staff, students and parents to help themselves. Brainstorm ways to keep it full.
- Hang colorful and fun posters that promote healthy snacks around the school.
- Promote the "eat a rainbow" message, which encourages eating natural foods that come in a variety of colors, or "Go, Slow, Whoa" – "go" foods can be eaten almost anytime, "slow" foods should be eaten less often, and "whoa" foods should be eaten only once in a while or on special occasions.

### Making a Difference

As co-directors of the wellness committee at Cougar Run Elementary in Colorado, moms Annie Romano and Yvonne Faulkner decided to make promoting healthier snacks a priority, establishing P.A.C.K (Pack Assorted Colors for Kids) Week in the spring and timing it to lead up to a school fun run. Each day, students were encouraged to bring a fruit or vegetable of a certain color for their snack (for example, Monday was "Pack Purple Day" and Wednesday was "Pack Red Day"). The wellness committee also urged students to wear the color of the day, which promoted the program, generated excitement and fostered school spirit.

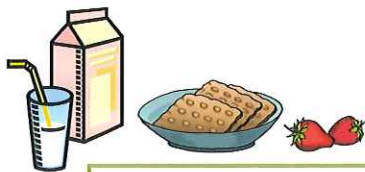
P.A.C.K. Week was a huge success. The majority of students participated, and the wellness committee noticed that after the week was over, students chose more fresh fruits and vegetables at lunchtime. P.A.C.K. Week now takes place at Cougar Run twice a year.



### Put plenty of fruits and veggies on the snack menu

Only 1% of adults and 2% of children meet both of the daily fruit and vegetable targets recommended by the USDA's Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010.<sup>2</sup> The USDA's MyPlate icon ([www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov)) urges us to fill half our plate with fruits and vegetables at every eating occasion. For most Americans, this means more than doubling the amount of fruits and vegetables we eat daily.<sup>3</sup>





# Healthy Snack Recommendations

| Snacks   | Beverages  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ As much as 30 percent of kids' daily calories come from snacks – and if they're eating processed, grain-based snack foods (like many of the popular, heavily-marketed options out there), two thirds of those calories might be coming from added sugars.<sup>4</sup> For healthy growth and development, make fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low fat/fat-free dairy products the primary choices.</li> <li>■ Portion control is very important – snacks should be served in appropriate portion sizes for a child's age, size and activity level.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Encourage kids to drink water instead of sugary drinks throughout the day, including snack time. Soda, energy drinks and sports drinks are a major source of added sugar, and calories, in American diets.</li> <li>■ Low fat/fat-free milk is a nutritious choice that helps kids get the nutrients their growing bodies need.</li> <li>■ Juices (100%) also provide important nutrients. Watch portions: Juice boxes, milk chugs or 8 ounce servings make for a great snack during the school day.</li> </ul> |

## Additional Resources

Learn more about P.A.C.K. Week from Welch's:  
<http://www.welchs.com/pack>

Learn more about the Go, Slow, Whoa initiative and download the food chart:  
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/eat-right/choosing-foods.htm>

For easy to follow nutrition information in English and Spanish, check out the USDA's 10 Tips Nutrition Education Series: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-tips/ten-tips.html>



*For a list of healthy school snack food ideas visit:*

**[www.ActionforHealthyKids.org/ParentToolkit-FoodIdeas](http://www.ActionforHealthyKids.org/ParentToolkit-FoodIdeas)**

**Action for Healthy Kids®** partners with teachers, students, parents, school wellness experts and more to fight childhood obesity, undernourishment and physical inactivity by helping schools become healthier places so kids can live healthier lives. Our programs, tools and resources make it possible for everyone to play their part in ending the nation's childhood obesity epidemic.

**[www.ActionforHealthyKids.org](http://www.ActionforHealthyKids.org)**

The websites listed in this document are provided as a service only to identify potentially useful ideas and resources for creating healthier school cultures. Action for Healthy Kids is not responsible for maintaining these external websites, nor does the listing of these sites constitute or imply endorsement of their content.

<sup>1</sup>Center for Young Women's Health, Boston Children's Hospital, [http://www.youngwomenshealth.org/healthy\\_snack\\_attack.html](http://www.youngwomenshealth.org/healthy_snack_attack.html)

<sup>2</sup>"State of the Plate - 2010 Study on America's Consumption of Fruits and Vegetables," Produce for Better Health Foundation.

<sup>3</sup><http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/dietary-guidelines-for-americans>

<sup>4</sup>"Healthy Kids Learn Better - Tips to Shape Healthy Habits," Webinar Series: Parents and Nutrition, Presented by: Ohio Action for Healthy Kids and Ohio Parent Teacher Association 3/20/12

