Healthy Summer Snacking

Summertime is all about getting out and having fun. Those days on the beach, at the pool, at the park, on road trips, etc. offer lots of fun – but also lots of (unhealthy) food! Summer should leave us and our kids with memories, not extra pounds.

Below are a few tips to help you plan ahead when you can, have back-up when you can’t, and teach your kids that eating healthy can be fun.

Plan Ahead
Planning out your weekly activities and meals helps to limit the number of high-fat and sugary treats you and your kids eat. If you know you’ll likely get a treat at the fair on Saturday evening, add more veggies and fruit to lunch. Make or share the plan with your kids to involve them in the decision-making and to reduce their requests for unhealthy treats through the week.

Have Back-Up
Buy some healthy snacks that won’t go bad too quickly, like whole grain crackers, dried fruit, fruit cups (packed in juice or light syrup), or unsweetened apple sauce cups, and keep them in your bag or in the car. A non-perishable kid-friendly alternative to fruit is dried fruit or no-sugar-added fruit snacks, such as FruitaBu, Stretch Island Company fruit leathers, or Everyday Fruit Real Fruit Snacks.

Top 10 Throw-in-Your-Bag Snacks

- Baby carrots
- Sliced peppers
- Grape or cherry tomatoes
- Blueberries
- Strawberries
- Cut melon
- Unsweetened apple sauce
- Fruit cups in juice or light syrup
- Dried fruit
- Brown rice cakes

For more on healthy kids’ snack ideas, go to: http://cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/kids_snacks.pdf
Drink in the Summer

This summer, when you reach for something cool and refreshing, try these drink and popsicle suggestions.

**Water**
Water should make up the largest percentage of what we drink everyday, especially in the summer when our hydration needs increase.

At home, keep a pitcher of water in your fridge and serve only water at meals. If you’re trying to get your kids to drink less juice, try filling an ice tray with juice and dropping one ‘juice cube’ into a glass of water for a fun twist. You also can make drinking water more fun by using decorated cups, bendy straws, or shaped ice cube trays, or by adding a wedge of lemon, lime, or orange.

Whenever you leave the house, fill up BPA-free* bottles with water for you and your kids, which will quench your thirst and save you money. If you’re in a rush or planning for a kids’ party, you can purchase kid-size water bottles and keep them in the fridge. Some kid-friendly options include: Deer Park Aqua Pod, Deer Park Half-Pint Natural Spring Water, and Wateroos, which are water drink boxes.

*To avoid BPA, avoid bottles with #7 on the bottom.

**Juice**
Juices can offer some nutritional benefits, but they also contribute additional calories that many kids can’t afford. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children ages 1 to 6 years drink no more than 6 oz of 100% juice a day and that children 7 to 18 years drink no more than 12 oz per day. Parents should avoid purchasing juice drinks, such as Capri Sun (Roarin’ Waters, Sunrise, and Reduced Sugars varieties) and all varieties of Hi-C, Sunny Delight, and Hawaiian Punch.

As an alternative to juice, give children water or fresh or frozen fruit. Summertime offers lots of seasonal favorites like strawberries, blueberries, peaches, nectarines, blackberries, and more — all with plenty of nutritional benefits and few calories.

When you do buy juice, look for 100% juice with no added sugars or sweeteners, flavors, or dyes. Some kid-friendly options include Apple & Eve 100% Juice, Juicy Juice, or Minute Maid 100% Juice, all of which come in child-size drink boxes.

**Popsicles**
Popsicles are a favorite summer treat. To keep them healthy, look for popsicles made with fruit and without added sugars and artificial food dyes. Some healthier options include Full of Fruit Frozen Bars by Natural Choice and Fruit Juice Freezers by Cool Fruits.

Popsicles also can be made at home with healthy ingredients. When making popsicles at home, use 100% juice and try diluting it with a little water to reduce the caloric content. You also can blend together fresh fruit and/or plain yogurt with juice to create smoothie popsicles. Check out tovolo.com for a line of fun-shaped popsicle molds and recipes.

For more information, visit: www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy.