

After-School Snacks: Do You Make Healthy Choices?

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I remember a conversation I once had with a woman in her mid-80s, in which she told me about the after-school snacks she used to make. Every week, she said, she made several homemade apple pies so that her kids and their friends would always have a wonderful fresh treat on hand after school. Sound like your house?

I didn't think so! Times have changed, and my guess is that you do not make many apple pies for your kids to munch on after school. There is barely enough time in the day to pick up the kids, get them to any after-school activities they might have, help them with their homework, and get them into bed for an adequate night's sleep.

And yet, because snacks can have such a big impact on diet, parents must choose to make them a healthy addition to what their children eat.

Try putting containers in your cupboard and in your refrigerator that are filled with small, pre-portioned amounts of snacks. Tell your kids they can help themselves to a snack as long as they find it in one of these two containers.

In your refrigerator's snack compartment, include:

- Yogurt cups
- Cottage cheese and fruit
- Fresh vegetables with dips such as hummus
- Olives
- Cheese sticks
- Chopped up fruit or fruit cups
- Pudding cups

In your cupboard, stock small, pre-portioned amounts of these foods:

- Granola or cereal bars chopped into bite-sized lengths
- Nuts or trail mix
- Light popcorn or pretzels
- Dried fruit
- Portions of whole-grain cereal (to eat either dry or with milk)

Toss the chips and cookies in the trash and help your kids make healthy snack choices. You will need to do some extra preparation, but the effort is worth it. Plan after-school snacks and be a fit family — and every once in a while, get out Granny's apple-pie recipe!