Smart summer snacking

Without the routine of school days to structure your youngster’s eating, she may need a little extra guidance to make good choices. Consider these tips for healthy summer snacking.

Stock up
Let your youngster choose nutritious snacks at the grocery store and keep them in convenient spots at home. Maybe she’ll put string cheese, carrot sticks, and grapes in a refrigerator drawer. Or she might place whole-wheat crackers, plain popcorn, and unsalted nuts in a basket in the pantry. Idea: Stick notes on the snacks with messages like “Pick me! I’m good for you!”

Make a menu
Does your child need snacks for day care or camp? Let her post a weekly snack menu, just like her school lunch menu. She’ll have a say in what she eats, and she’ll know what to take each morning. You might help her roll up apple slices and cheese in a whole-wheat tortilla or leftover chicken and vegetables in a lettuce wrap, for instance.

Go on a snack-nic
Combine snacking with physical activity. Together, pack healthy snacks like hummus and celery sticks or bananas and peanut butter. Then, take along a ball, and walk or bike to a playground for a “snack-nic.” Spread out a blanket on the grass or eat at a picnic table. Afterward, play a game of catch.

Fun under the stars

Playing outside on a warm summer night can create wonderful memories for your child. Get inspired with these active ideas.

Follow the stars. Point out constellations, such as the Big Dipper. Your youngster can copy the “star picture” in the grass by laying small toys in the same pattern. Have him walk or jump along the starry path. Tip: Use a library book or smartphone app to identify constellations.

Flashlight tag. In this version of tag, “It” tags other players with a beam of light. If the flashlight shines on a player, he’s caught. Continue until only one player is left. That person becomes “It.”

Just for fun

Q: What do you have when there are five oranges in your left hand and seven in your right?
A: Big hands!

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Around the world

Looking for a healthy way to teach your child about different cultures? Try a mix of traditional games and foods to explore how people play and eat. Here are two countries to choose from.

Armenia

**Play** egg jousting. Each player holds a hard-boiled egg like a sword. Tap your eggs together until one cracks. Then, save the eggs for a snack.

**Eat** cucumber and tomato salad. Cut 3 cucumbers and 2 tomatoes into 1-inch chunks. Combine with ½ cup each chopped cilantro and parsley. In a separate bowl, stir together 2 tbsp. lemon juice and ¼ cup olive oil, then drizzle over the salad.

Ghana

**Play** pilolo. With a group of five or more, paint a dozen rocks, and have a “leader” hide them around a yard. For each round, he stands at a finish line and yells pilolo (“time to search for”). The first player to find a stone and cross the finish line with it scores a point and becomes the leader. The new leader hides the rocks and the group plays again. The player with the most points after 10 rounds wins.

**Eat** omo tuo (rice balls). Prepare rice according to package directions, mash with a potato masher until smooth, and use an ice cream scoop or melon baller to form balls. Place omo tuo in bowls of your favorite soup.

Tip: Help your youngster locate each country on a map. He could research foods from nearby countries—he’ll notice that similar dishes may be popular within the same region.

Sunday brunch

Between school, work, soccer practice, and Cub Scouts, our family’s life had become so busy there was barely time for dinner together. So I came up with the idea of a regular Sunday brunch.

I told my sons about the plan and asked for menu ideas. Pancakes, my younger son suggested. Scrambled eggs, my older one said. We decided on a month of menus and agreed we would all help to prepare the food.

After just a few weeks, Sunday brunch has become a family tradition. We look forward to a healthy meal—and each other’s company! Here’s the recipe for one of our favorites, cinnamon French toast.

Beat 3 eggs with 1 tsp. cinnamon and 1 tsp. sugar. Dip 6 slices of whole-grain bread in the mixture. In a pan coated with nonstick spray, saute until crisp.

Fruity desserts

Celebrate the juicy fruits of summer with desserts that taste as good as they look. Your youngster will have fun making them with you, too.

**Watermelon “layer cake”**

Cut three round slices from a watermelon. Let your child stir together 1 cup plain fat-free Greek yogurt, 1 tbsp. honey, and ½ tsp. vanilla extract. Then, she should spread the mixture on each watermelon slice and stack the “layers” into a cake.

**Berry sundae**

Have your youngster mix blueberries, raspberries, and blackberries with fat-free whipped cream. She can fill an ice cream cone with the mixture and top with chopped walnuts.

**Fruit kebabs**

Help your child thread a wooden skewer with grapes and chunks of apple, banana, and cantaloupe—alternating to make a colorful pattern.