

Make your child's next holiday treat a healthy one!

February 2011



Valentine's Day is just around the corner. Sharing treats with friends can be a great way for kids to celebrate holidays and birthdays throughout the year. Before you buy a bag of candy or sweets, consider the impact sugar-laden foods have on children. Excessive sugar in a child's diet can lead to increased risk of overweight and obesity which has been linked to other health related issues. According to the American Heart Association, children should be limited to 3 teaspoons a day of sugar. 1 Tootsie Pop alone contains 2 teaspoons of sugar. Children's bodies require nutritious foods to grow at their full potential. Challenge yourself to choose these healthier options next time a birthday or holiday rolls around and you'll be on the road to better health. Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition members encourage you to have your kids replace Valentine, birthday or celebratory candy and sweets with one of these healthier options.

- Sliced fruit such as watermelon, oranges, strawberries, Clementines, pineapple, etc. or fruit salad
- Fruit kabobs on pretzel sticks with yogurt or a small amount of peanut butter for dipping
- Cut-up raw veggies such as carrots, celery, cucumber or broccoli served with hummus or other low-fat dip
- Mini-bags of graham crackers, Gold Fish, or pretzels
- Low-fat sliced cheese and whole-grain crackers
- Low-fat string cheese or cheese cubes
- Whole-grain mini bagels
- Animal crackers
- Individually packaged unsweetened applesauce, raisins or Craisins
- Yogurt topped with fruit or granola
- Granola bars
- Ants on a Log
- Whole-grain rice cakes
- Trail mix (dried fruit and whole-grain cereals)
- Low-fat microwave popcorn tossed with Parmesan cheese

Does your child's day care or classroom send kids home with goodie bags? For a healthy alternative fill them with these non-food items:

- Stickers or washable tattoos
- Fun pencils, erasers, small box of crayons, markers, gel pens, or colored pencils
- Coloring book or construction paper
- Wrist bands or bracelets

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- Hot Wheel or Matchbox Car
- Stamps with a small ink pad
- Jump ropes, mini Frisbees, chalk or other activity equipment
- Small container of Play dough
- Small notebooks
- Bubbles
- Bouncy balls
- Small packet of seeds
- Flash cards or card games (Go Fish, Old Maid)

Get Your Family Eating Right with Color

March 2011

March is National Nutrition Month[®] and the American Dietetic Association encourages everyone to add color and nutrients to their meals through this year's theme: "Eat Right with Color." This year's National Nutrition Month theme is a great reminder for parents to focus on a variety of foods and colors in every meal, every day.

Spring is a great time to amaze your family with color! Eating [fruits](#) and [vegetables](#) in a variety of colors — [red, dark green, yellow, blue, purple, white and orange](#), gives them a broad range of [nutrients](#) such as: fiber, folate, potassium, and vitamins A and C. So “think variety, think color” and everybody wins!

Make it a family challenge to include fruits and vegetables with a variety of colors at each meal. Here are some family friendly tips:

- Serve a vegetable blend at meals, which can include broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, zucchini, and peppers.
- Decorate your entrees, add lettuce, peppers, and tomatoes to sandwiches or burgers and top your potatoes with chives, diced tomatoes, and broccoli.
- Fruit salads are an easy way to increase variety: Try mixing berries, kiwi, pineapple, grapes, and bananas.
- Color your breakfast by topping pancakes, yogurt and oatmeal with peaches, blueberries, raspberries, or grapes.
- Make a dried fruit and nut mix for snacks. Include dried apples, apricots, cranberries, peaches, pears, cherries and mixed nuts.
- Try a variety of toppings on your fruit or vegetable pizza:
 - pineapple and onion
 - red and green peppers and mushrooms
 - fresh tomato and spinach

Eat Healthy, Be Active

Remember children are more likely to try more fruits and vegetables if they are involved. Here are some tips to get your children involved and excited about cooking.

- Involve the whole family in meal planning for the week.
- Have children pick out fruit and vegetables at the grocery store or Farmer's Market.
- Allow children to wash produce.
- Depending on their age allow them to peel or slice produce.
- Encourage children to read the recipe and measure ingredients.
- Allow children to set the table and serve the prepared food.

Studies show it may take up to 15 times for children to accept new foods. Don't force your children to eat fruits and vegetables; we want kids to associate fun and positive memories with eating these healthy foods. As always be a great role model and show your children how much you enjoy fruits and vegetables.

Enjoy a Healthy July 4th Picnic!

June 2011

Picnics are a July 4th tradition! While many picnic foods can be high in fat and calories, with a few tweaks you can still enjoy many of your favorite picnic foods and "eat healthy". Follow some of these tips from Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition members for delicious and nutritious picnic fare.



1. **Think beyond chips as a snack!** You get to the park, you won't eat for another hour and the kids (and adults) want a snack to tide them over. Instead of reaching for that bag of potato chips try pita pocket wedges and hummus, celery stuffed with peanut butter or baked tortilla chips and salsa (make your own chips by spraying corn tortilla wedges with cooking spray, sprinkle with salt and baking for 7-10 minutes in a 400 degree oven until crisp)
2. **Grilling? Think lean ...** Typical ground beef patties can be 15-20% fat while hot dogs can be much higher...and that's before you add the toppings! Reach instead for turkey brats, ground chicken or turkey to make your burgers or try grilled portabella mushrooms. Top with salsa, grated cheese (you use less cheese!) or fresh sliced veggies such as sliced tomatoes or cucumbers and wrap in a whole wheat bun. For a change of pace...think kebabs!
3. **Choose healthy sides...** Pasta salads, potato salads and coleslaw can be "lightened up" without sacrificing flavor. Use low or nonfat Italian salad dressing to dress your pasta salad and replace some of the pasta with several cups of chopped veggies to improve your salad's nutritional profile. Lighten up your potato salad by replacing the full fat mayo in the dressing with a half low fat mayo-half plain non-fat yogurt mix and use a vinaigrette dressing rather than mayo on your coleslaw. Fill half your picnic plate with grilled veggies, grilled fruit or chopped veggie or fruit salads.
4. **Drink healthy beverages...** Is your cooler filled with pop and other sugary drinks? Instead, pack your cooler with no/low calorie flavored ice tea, juice boxes, sparkling water, bottled water or homemade lemonade.
5. **Can't do without dessert?** Are cookies, brownies and cake your dessert mainstays? For a red, white and blue patriotic dessert try angel food cake (1/2 the calories of regular cake) with sliced

strawberries and blueberries. Fruit kebabs are another light refreshing alternative. To make kebabs skewer grapes, strawberries and pineapple chunks on a pretzel stick. The salty pretzel and sweet fruit make a nice combination!

And remember...food safety is important! Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot. Any food that has sat out for 2 hours or more should be discarded and not brought home! Looking for more picnic ideas? Bring along a Footsteps to Health salad, side or dessert to your holiday celebration. It's sure to fast become a holiday favorite.

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