



Healthy Snacks, Healthy Kids

Objectives

- ▶ Youth will explore the importance of healthy snacks.
- ▶ Youth will be able to identify healthy snack options.

Materials needed

- Cutting board
- Paring knife
- Paper plates
- Napkins
- Plastic knives
- Rice cakes
- Natural peanut butter or other nut butters* or non- or low-fat cream cheese
- Fresh strawberries
- Blank recipe cards or index cards

*Check with youth about allergies – substitutions can be made.

Background

Sometimes we feel hungry in between meals and need more energy to help us get through the day. A snack is a small amount of food eaten between meals to help us fuel up. Our bodies use food as fuel, very similar to how cars use gasoline. When filling up a car with gas, we want to choose the right fuel to help the car run well. We can apply this same approach to our bodies. When choosing what foods to eat, it is important to think about what exactly our bodies need to function properly.

Some foods have a lot of what we call “empty calories.” This means they don’t have many nutrients that our bodies need, such as vitamins and protein, but they do have things that our bodies don’t need a lot of, such as solid fats and added sugars. Some examples of foods that have a lot of empty calories are cakes, cookies, soda, ice cream, fruit snacks, candy and pizza. If you eat these foods throughout the day, your body won’t be able to function at its best. They often will leave you feeling hungry, tired, and weak. These foods are OK to eat every once in a while, but they aren’t snacks that you should choose every day.

When you choose snacks that are packed with the nutrients your body needs, you will have a lot of energy. These snacks also help you to feel strong, grow strong, and prevent sickness and diseases. Fruits and vegetables are great snacks to reach for, and they’re good for on the go, too. Other foods that are healthy snacks are whole grains, low-fat and fat-free dairy products, and lean proteins. If you fuel up with these types of foods throughout the day, you will have more energy to learn and play.



Activity with youth

1. Hand out an index or blank recipe card to each youth. Participants will be able to use these cards to create their healthy snack recipes and take them home and recreate the snack later.
2. Divide the youth into smaller groups of three to four kids.
3. Give each youth a paper plate, napkin and plastic knife.
4. Provide each group with a tub of peanut butter or cream cheese, a bowl of sliced strawberries and a bag of low-sodium rice cakes.
5. Have the youth assemble their healthy snack by spreading peanut butter on the rice cracker and topping it with strawberries.

Questions to ask

- ▶ *When do you feel the most hungry throughout the day? It could be after a certain class, after school, after dinner, etc.*
- ▶ *When could you eat a snack during the day?*
- ▶ *What kind of healthy snacks could you make at home?*
- ▶ *What kind of healthy snacks could you bring with you during the day in case you get hungry?*

Other resources

- ▶ MyPlate – <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>
- ▶ USDA Supertracker – <https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/default.aspx>
- ▶ National 4-H Healthy Living Curriculum – <http://www.4-hmall.org/Category/food-healthy-living.aspx>



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