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Healthy After School Snack Attacks for Kids on the Go

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Why are some kids really grumpy, emotional or tired after school?



Distraction and not enough time to eat lunch. Some kids can be too distracted at school to get in enough healthy nutrition needed for growth and brain functioning. Other kids are pokey slow eaters or picky and need more encouragement and reminding during lunch time to eat their meal.

Maximize breakfast. Be sure to offer a substantial breakfast with carbohydrates from grains and fruits to help provide the brain with energy and a good source of protein since foods such as milk, soy milk, yogurt, cheese, nuts, nut

butters, eggs and meat provide more sustained fullness. Traditional breakfast items are great but also consider your kids favorite supper meals such as leftover pizza or quesadillas as other options.

Talk to your school. While it may not be possible for lunch supervisors of busy schools to help, meet them and let them know about the challenge to see if there is anything they can do.

Talk to your child. Educate your child about how nutrition is tied to their mood and energy and doing well at school so they understand why it is important.

Make lunch packing fun. Get kids involved in lunch planning and consider bento box style lunches with cubed cheese, sliced meat, crackers, cut up fresh fruit and veggies, hard cooked eggs, French toast strips with jam, mini bran muffins or dried fruit that are often appealing to kids.

What do I do if my kid brings home a full lunch box and is ravenous when they get home from school but I don't want them to spoil their supper?

Offer a healthy snack with both carbohydrates as well as protein. Consider offering some of the foods that are often trickier to get them to eat since this is a time they are most hungry. For example if your child doesn't love veggies at supper be sure to offer some of these such as raw veggies with hummus, celery with nut butter, vegetable soup or Greek salad with a few whole grain crackers or other grains.

Consider moving supper later (or earlier). There are many ways to eat healthy. Having a large after school snack and late supper versus a small after school snack, earlier dinner and small bedtime snack are both healthy options. Try out a few options and see what works best for your family schedule.

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What are some healthy after school snack options that are great for home as well as for in the car if they are on the way to an extracurricular activity?

1. Whole-wheat pita bread and hummus with celery sticks.
2. Multigrain crackers with cream cheese topped with cucumbers or red peppers.
3. Smoothie made with yogurt, frozen berries, banana and unsweetened juice or milk.
4. Dry ready-to-eat breakfast cereal mixed with dried fruit (such as raisins, dried cranberries, dates, figs, prunes and dried apricots) as well as mixed shelled nuts or seeds (such as peanuts, almonds, cashews, pumpkin seeds or sunflower seeds). Other popular additions include pretzels, popcorn, crackers and chocolate chips.
5. Chocolate milk and a banana (or toss these in the blender with ice for a smoothie).
6. Taco chips with bean dip (layer canned refried beans, avocado, salsa and top with grated cheddar cheese)
7. Oatmeal date squares and a glass of milk.
8. Raw veggies such as grape/cherry tomatoes, carrots, celery, broccoli, cauliflower, snow/snap peas with creamy dip.
9. Mug of hot chocolate made with milk and oatmeal cookies.
10. Apple or rhubarb crisp with frozen yogurt.
11. Rice Krispie squares made with part bran cereal and raisins.
12. Bran muffin and cheddar cheese with grapes.
13. Greek salad.
14. Yogurt parfait with yogurt, berries (or alternatively try fresh or canned unsweetened pineapple or peaches) and granola.
15. Whole wheat crackers with cheddar or other cheese.
16. Mini bocconcini (fresh mozzarella cheese) and grape/cherry tomatoes on toothpicks.
17. Taco chips with salsa
18. Spread peanut butter or other nut butter on a banana and roll in crushed breakfast cereal.
19. Fresh fruit kabob with yogurt dip.
20. Oatmeal or ready-to-eat breakfast cereal and milk.
21. Grated carrots and raisins with sweet vinaigrette.
22. Homemade chips (cut up whole wheat pita or tortillas into triangles with scissors, spray or brush with oil and top with a sprinkle of salt and bake until crispy).
23. Unsweetened applesauce cup and whole wheat crackers with tzatziki dip.
24. Frozen grapes and cubes of cheese.
25. Cold leftover pancakes or French toast with jam.
26. Cottage cheese with sliced apples or pears with a sprinkle of cinnamon.
27. Hard boiled egg and whole wheat crackers.
28. Freeze leftover smoothies into popsicle cups for healthy homemade frozen popsicles.
29. Yogurt tubes frozen and frozen grapes.
30. Dessert flavored tofu with sliced strawberries or other berries.
31. Warm vanilla milk (mug of milk with vanilla and a pinch of brown sugar) and chocolate chip oatmeal cookies.
32. Banana bread, banana muffins or carrot muffins served with yogurt.

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33. Mini pizzas made with mini whole wheat bagels or pita bread and tomato sauce, meat, veggies and cheese.
34. Homemade air-popped popcorn with butter or non-hydrogenated margarine.
35. Mix almond butter or peanut butter with water to make a runny dip for pretzels, celery sticks, banana or apple slices.

Andrea Holwegner, known as the Chocoholic Dietitian, is founder and president of Health Stand Nutrition Consulting Inc., a member of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers and a media expert for the Dietitians of Canada. For nutrition counselling information and to sign up for a free monthly newsletter loaded with nutrition tips, recipes and more visit www.healthstandnutrition.com. Twitter @chocoholicRD.

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