

# Back-to-School Snacks

It happens every year. Summer speeds by far too quickly and in no time we find ourselves thinking about packing school lunches and stocking healthy after-school snacks again. But it's always a struggle—the desire to provide nutritious foods vs. the need to have convenient foods.

Fortunately, several food manufacturers have felt our pain and are offering snacks for kids (of course Mom and Dad can eat them too!) that satisfy both that need for speed and good health.

It goes without saying that fresh fruits and vegetables always make for a healthy choice. But what if you need something less perishable or your son wants a savory/salty snack while your daughter is begging for a sweet treat? Whatever your needs are, you should be able to find something on our list to meet them.

- **Clif Kid Organic Twisted Fruit:** Chewy little fruit snacks are extremely popular in the school-aged crowd, but most contain no fruit and are simply sugar, artificial ingredients, and preservatives. But not these! Made from real fruit and with no added sugar, they're a great alternative to chewy fruit snacks.
- **Vans Natural Foods Minis Waffles (plain or chocolate chip):** Delicious for breakfast or an after-school snack, you can toast and top them with peanut butter and raisins or bananas for a healthy treat.
- **Kettle corn:** It's tough to beat whole grain goodness with a sweet/salty crunch. I look for brands that contain only four ingredients—popcorn, oil, sugar, and salt—like Trader Joe's and Popcorn, Indiana (which also makes a cinnamon kettle corn).



- **Applesauce cups.** As long as you stick with the no-sugar-added varieties, these are ideal with lunch or as a snack. Plain applesauce is great heated with a bit of cinnamon, and the flavored varieties are good as is or frozen for a sort of slushie/ice pop.
- **Cereal:** It's not just for breakfast. Choose one that's low in sugar (9 grams or less per serving) that can be eaten as is or mixed with dried fruit and nuts for a

## A HEALTHY SWEET TREAT

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homemade trail mix. I love Cascadian Farms' kids' cereals.

● **Reduced-fat cheese sticks:** Choose mozzarella, cheddar, Monterey jack, or a twisty combo. A tasty way to get a bit of calcium, they're great alone or paired with fruit or whole grain crackers such as Whole Grain Wheat Thins or Reduced Fat Triscuits.

● **Homemade goodies:** Don't underestimate the goodness of made-from-scratch treats. When you have a bit of time, make some banana, zucchini, or carrot muffins or bread. After they cool, place in sealable freezer bags (slice the bread first). When the kids need a snack, just pop one in the microwave to defrost or add to a lunch box as is and it'll thaw by mealtime.

● **Yogurt:** The new Greek yogurts are lower in sugar and higher in protein and full of yummy creaminess. Chobani has a line geared toward kids called Chobani Champions, which comes in Very Berry and



Honey-Nana flavors. Eat them as is or freeze with a popsicle stick stuck through the top.

● **Snikiddy Snacks:** Choose from puffs or fries in a variety of flavors such as Cheddar Cheese and Classic Ketchup. They're an all-natural alternative to fried chips and cheese puffs for when your kids need a salty crunch. ♣

— Heidi Reichenberger McIndoo, MS, RD, LDN

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