

## General Guidelines on Choosing Healthy Snacks

### Nutrition Facts and Healthy Snacks

Use food product labels to your advantage when choosing foods in the marketplace. Look at all parts of a label to make your best informed decision, because looks can be deceiving.

In general, keep your eyes peeled for:

- ❑ Nutrition facts
- ❑ Ingredients list
- ❑ Nutrient content claims
- ❑ Health claims
- ❑ Trade logos that **may** imply a “healthy” product



### Fruits

All forms of fruits count – fresh, frozen, canned, dried, 100% juice

- ❑ Frozen fruits
  - Explore the variety of frozen fruits available all year-round
- ❑ Canned fruits
  - Drain your canned fruits OR choose ones packed in light syrup or 100% fruit juice
  - Compare sugar content. \*Keep in mind that the nutrition facts do not differentiate between *natural* versus *added* sugars.
  - Read the ingredient list. Choose products that contain little or no added sugars.
- ❑ Dried fruits
  - Explore the variety available all year long.
  - Note that some have *added* sugars.
- ❑ Juice
  - Always choose 100% juice without added sugars
  - Try different nutrient-dense varieties of 100% juice with added nutrients, like Calcium
    - *Minute Maid Premium Orange Juice with Calcium + Vitamin D* – 1 cup has:
      - 120% of the daily value (DV) of Vitamin C
      - 35% DV of calcium
      - 25% DV of Vitamin D
  - Limit juice as it lacks many nutrients that whole fruits have, like dietary fiber

## Vegetables

Like fruits, all forms of vegetables count – fresh, frozen and canned

- Fresh
  - Offer healthy, lower fat dressings to encourage the children to eat their vegetables
  - Choose washed and pre-cut vegetables for your convenience
  - Try a variety of convenient ready-to-serve bags of leafy greens, like spinach, iceberg, romaine, Caesar and more.
- Frozen
  - Offer healthy, lower fat dressings to encourage the children to eat their vegetables
  - Explore the variety of frozen vegetables available all year-round
  - Take advantage of their convenience by simply running under hot water or microwaving until thoroughly heated.
- Canned
  - Canned products offer the advantage of shelf stability and availability all year long
  - Drain your canned vegetables

## Grains

Encourage whole grains with snacks whenever possible. Identifying whole grains may involve careful interpretation of the food product label. In general, choose grain products with labels and ingredients lists indicating:

- “Whole” or “Whole Grain” in the product name or as the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> ingredient in the ingredient list
- “100% Whole Grain”
- “\_\_ grams of Whole Grains”
- Good or Excellent Source of Fiber
- Whole Grains Council Stamp
- American Heart Association Whole Grains Certification



- Cereal
  - Choose those made with whole grains
  - Choose ones with  $\leq 6$  grams of sugar per serving, which include those approved by the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program
    - *Quaker Life Cereal* –  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (21 grams) has:  
4 g of sugar
  - Try lower-sugar varieties of hot cereal

- Cereal bars
  - Choose ones with whole grains as the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> ingredient in the ingredient list
  - Explore the variety of choices available, including ones with less sugar than similar reference products
  - Choose those that have added nutrients, like calcium
 

- *Nature Valley Yogurt Chewy Granola Bars* - 1 bar (35 grams) has:  
Granola as the 1<sup>st</sup> ingredient  
20% DV of calcium
- Breads
  - Do not assume that brown colored bread indicates whole wheat bread. Instead, look for the clues listed above.
 

- *Thomas 100% Whole Wheat Bagel Thins* – 1 bagel (46 grams) has:  
Whole wheat flour as the first ingredient  
5 g of dietary fiber  
Nutrient claim indicating this product is an “Excellent Source of Fiber”
  - Choose bread that has added nutrients, like Calcium
- Rice
  - Brown rice is considered a “whole grain”
- Crackers
  - Take advantage of the different varieties of crackers on the market as many companies are adding “whole grain” versions to their product lines.
  - Choose crackers that are “reduced fat” (≥25% less fat compared to similar reference products) or “low fat” (≤ 3 g of fat per serving)
- Savory snacks
  - Choose chips and pretzels made with whole grains
 

- *Sun Chips Original* – 1 ounce has:  
Whole corn as the 1<sup>st</sup> ingredient  
Whole wheat and whole oat flour in lesser quantities  
3 g of dietary fiber  
18 g of whole grains per serving
  - Choose baked varieties of chips to moderate fat
  - Consider alternative savory snacks, such as pita chips, bagel chips, etc.

## **Milk or calcium source**

Offer low fat (1%) or non fat milk.

- ❑ Compare the different varieties of soy milk and their varying sugar content.
- ❑ Choose plain versions, which usually have the least amount of added sugars.

## **Meat, meat alternates**

Choose those moderate in fat and with limited amounts of saturated fat.

- ❑ Cold cuts, processed meats
  - Read the nutrition facts and compare the different levels of fat and sodium content. Choose those with  $\leq 5\%$  of the daily value for fat and sodium per serving.
- ❑ Canned fish
  - Choose water-packed versus oil-packed
- ❑ Nut Butters
  - Try a variety of nut butters: peanut, almond, cashew, etc.
- ❑ Yogurt
  - Compare the many different varieties and flavors that are available
  - Try mixing flavored lowfat yogurt with plain yogurt to decrease the sugar content per serving
  - Choose lowfat or non-fat varieties
  - Try calcium-enriched or fiber-fortified versions
    - *Nancy's Nonfat Plain Yogurt* – 8 ounces has 45% DV Calcium
    - *Fiber One Nonfat Yogurt* – 4 ounces has 5 g fiber
- ❑ Try offering yogurt in a tube for added convenience
- ❑ Cheese
  - Be adventurous! Incorporate low fat cottage cheese in snacks
  - Look for the “3-Every-Day” logo

\*Examples given in this handout are not necessarily an endorsement for these products. Please follow the general guidelines to pick “healthy snacks.” Please email the Hawaii Child Care Nutrition Program ([hccnp@hawaii.edu](mailto:hccnp@hawaii.edu)) for questions.