AMERICAN COLLEGE OF
Lifestyle Medicine



Helping Kids Choose Healthy Snacks

When it comes to snack time, set up your kitchen so the easiest choice is also the healthiest one. By changing how your kitchen is organized, you give your kids the independence they want while making sure their go-to snacks are full of nutrient-rich energy.

1 Give Kids the Power to Choose

Kids are much more likely to eat healthy food when they feel like it's their own choice. Instead of making them ask for a snack, let them serve themselves.

- **Create a Snack Zone:** Dedicate one low drawer in the fridge and one place in the pantry just for easy access to snacks.
- **Pre-Approved Options:** Fill these spots with healthy snacks like apple slices, carrot sticks, nuts or whole grain crackers.
- **No More Arguing:** When they're hungry, just say, "Go pick something from your drawer." Since you already picked what goes in the drawer, any choice they make is a win.
- **Help Out:** Let your kids help restock their drawer once a week. If they help prepare it they are more likely to eat it.

2 Use Eye-Level Magic

Store brands pay a lot of money to put their products at eye level in grocery stores because they know people grab what they see first. You can use this trick at home!

- **Put the colorful, healthy foods about 3 to 4 feet off the ground**—right where your kids are looking.
- **Move treats to high shelves or into bins you can't see through.** If they aren't staring at the cookies, they won't ask for them as often.

3 Half-and-Half Trick

Switching a whole family's diet is hard. Instead of changing everything at once, try the blended approach. This helps everyone get used to new flavors.

- **Mix it up:** Combine the new healthy food with the old favorite.
- **Examples:** Mix 50% whole-grain pasta with 50% white pasta, or stir cauliflower rice into regular white rice. Over time, you can add more of the healthy stuff as they get used to it.

4 Beat the After-School Hunger

If your kids come home from school starving, they will grab the first thing they see. Have a healthy plate waiting on the counter or leave a note telling them to check the "snack zone."

- **Try this:** A plate of bananas with peanut butter or carrots with hummus sitting right there when they walk in.

5 Make it Fun: Rename Your Food

The way you talk about food can change a child's experience with it. Would you rather eat "broccoli" or "miniature trees"? Use fun words to make a dish sound like an adventure.

- Carrots → "Crunchy Coin Bites"
- Smoothies → "Monster Juice"

DO 1-2 OF THESE NOW

- ☐ Clear a low drawer in the fridge and spot in the pantry for healthy, kid-ready snacks.
- ☐ Prepare a plate of healthy snacks for the time of day your kids are usually the hungriest.
- ☐ Try a 50/50 mix for dinner tonight (like mixing two types of pasta or rice).
- ☐ Rename one vegetable for tonight's meal to make it sound more exciting.



The Bottom Line:
You aren't taking away choices; you are making the best choices the easiest ones to find. If you design the space for independence, healthy habits will follow.

nudge to nourish

Developed through a collaborative effort by the American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM) and Nudge to Nourish, in partnership with Greener by Default.