

Healthy Celebrations At School



We all love to celebrate our students' birthdays in class, however, we have to remember that our goal is to provide foods of **Maximum Nutritional Value**. Although birthdays come only once a year, there may be 25 or more "celebrations" in class during the school year including Valentines Day, Halloween, and other holidays.

Typically, food for school celebrations include candy, cookies, soda etc. Unhealthy choices often become the norm rather than the exception. Parties and treats used as classroom rewards, food fundraisers, and snacks available at school stores constantly expose children to high-fat, high-sugar, low-nutrient choices. **SO WHAT IS THE HARM?**

Obesity

Childhood obesity is one of our nation's leading threats. There are over 12 million children who are already at risk of becoming overweight or are overweight. More children who are normal weight, overweight and obese are developing conditions that you would normally see in adults, such as type-2 diabetes, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure. Constant exposure to low-nutrient foods makes it difficult for children to learn how to make healthy food choices. As today's children are tomorrow's adults, teaching them by example will assist in ensuring a more healthy future for our children.

Benefits of Healthy Celebrations

- **Healthy Children Learn Better**
- **Provides Consistent Messages**
- **Creates Excitement About Nutrition**
- **Protects Children with Food Allergies**
- **Optimize Growth and Development**
- **Having a Healthy Relationship with Food**
- **Encouraging Appropriate Portion Size**



What Can I Do?

Parents and students can help schools promote a healthy learning environment by having healthy celebrations. Plan celebrations with a game or craft that can be made in school. If you are including food, make it count with healthy choices! You can even incorporate a fun nutrition lesson when planning and preparing the healthy snacks.

Healthy Food Ideas

- Fruit smoothies (blend berries, bananas, and pineapple)
- Fresh fruit assortment (e.g. fruit and cheese kabobs, fruit salad, or fruit with low-fat whipped topping)
- Dried fruit (e.g., raisins, cranberries, apricots, banana chips), 100% fruit snacks
- Vegetable trays with low-fat dip, celery and carrots with peanut butter, and raisins
- Whole grain crackers/pretzels with low-fat cheese cubes, low-fat string cheese, hummus
- Low-fat or air popped popcorn, rice cakes
- Angel food cake, plain or topped with fresh fruit
- Low-fat pudding, low-fat yogurt, low-fat yogurt parfaits or banana splits (e.g., yogurt and fruit topped with cereal, granola, or crushed graham crackers)
- Baked tortilla chips with salsa, bean dip, or guacamole
- Trail/cereal mix (e.g., whole-grain, low-sugar cereals mixed with dried fruits, pretzels)



Activities

- Provide game supplies, pencils, erasers, stickers, and other small school supplies instead of food
- Work with the teacher to see if children can be given extra recess time instead of a class party
- Go outside and participate in fun outdoor activities, such as a relay race, potato sack races, sports etc
- Create a treasure hunt based on the celebration.
- Build a garden with the class
- Let birthday child pick a fun craft

