



## Choose Healthy After-School Snacks

by Patti Ghezzi

**A GREAT KIDS' SNACK IS SATISFYING,** healthy, and yummy. It's big enough to curb hunger until the next meal, but not so big that it spoils your appetite. Here are some ideas for creating healthy after-school snacks.

**Reach for protein.** Cheese, nuts, yogurt, peanut butter, hard-boiled eggs, hummus,

meat, and other protein-rich foods will fill up your child and give him the energy to power through his homework.

**Choose whole grains.** Whole wheat bread, crackers, pretzels, and cereals have more fill-you-up fiber than foods made from white flour.

**Cut back on sugar.** Sweeten plain yogurt with jam or fruit juice concentrate. Find cereals with the lowest amount of sugar. If your child craves chocolate, offer a miniature bar of semi-sweet chocolate. When making baked goods, try cutting the sugar in half.

**Prepackage to control portions.** If your kids tend to overeat after school, prepare their snacks in advance and place in a labeled container. After they have their snack, close the kitchen until dinnertime.

**Put out a platter.** Prepare a plate full of

**Plan out a week's lunches and snacks**  
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healthy snack choices such as raw veggies, fruit, low-fat cheese, olives, nuts, and whole wheat crackers. Add low-fat ranch dressing as a dip and hummus or mashed avocado as a spread.

**Try breakfast foods.** High-protein cereal, oatmeal, turkey bacon, whole-wheat bagels, English muffins, and frozen whole-grain waffles are just some of the breakfast foods that make tasty after-school snacks.

**Don't overlook leftovers.** A snack can be a small portion of your child's leftover dinner favorites such as spaghetti, a chicken breast, or even a taco.

**Combine salty and sweet.** Crush a handful of pretzels and stir them into lightly sweetened yogurt, preferably the high-protein Greek variety. Or spread peanut butter on a whole-wheat cracker and sprinkle with mini chocolate chips. Pop a bowl of popcorn and sprinkle with just a few dashes of cinnamon, salt, and sugar. ■



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### Easy Homemade Snacks

Are your kids tired of the same old after-school treats? Mix things up with one of these recipes, which put healthy spins on familiar favorites.

#### FRUIT QUESADILLA

2 whole wheat tortillas  
 ½ apple, thinly sliced  
 ¼ cup shredded low-fat cheese  
*Place one tortilla in lightly oiled skillet. Spread out apple slices evenly on top of the tortilla. Sprinkle it with cheese. Top with second tortilla. Over medium heat, cook about two minutes on each side or until tortillas are slightly browned and cheese is melted. Slice into wedges.*

#### HOMEWORK BROWNIES

1 box brownie mix, combined according to package directions  
 1 cup shredded zucchini, squeezed dry  
 1 cup shredded carrots  
*Stir shredded zucchini and carrots into brownie batter. Pour batter into greased mini-muffin tins, filling about two-thirds full. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 to 18 minutes.*

#### AFTER-SCHOOL GORP

2 cups unsweetened cereal, such as toasted oats or rice squares  
 ½ cup chocolate chips or candy-coated chocolates  
 ½ cup nuts  
 ½ cup dried fruit  
*Toss together and divide into 5 servings of ½ cup each.*



## Keep Kids Healthy This Winter

by Patti Ghezzi

### COLD WEATHER AND GETTING SICK

go together like a hat and mittens. More than 22 million school days are lost in the U.S. each year to colds. The flu causes children to miss millions more school days.

All kids get sick, but there are steps you

can take to keep your family healthy and your kids in school.

### FEND OFF GERMS

Set a good example for your children by washing your own hands thoroughly and often. Experts advise rubbing your hands with soap for at least 20 seconds, or long enough to sing “Happy Birthday” twice. Remind your kids to wash their hands until it becomes a habit. If soap and water aren’t available for hand-washing, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Teach your children not to sneeze or cough into their hands. Encourage them to use a tissue once and then toss it. When no tissue is available, they should cough or sneeze into their sleeve or elbow, not their hands.

Discourage kids from biting their fingernails,

### Fun hand-washing reminder labels [schoolfamily.com/thrive](http://schoolfamily.com/thrive)

chewing on pencils, and other germ-spreading habits. And remind them not to share drinks or eating utensils.

### GET A FLU SHOT

Make sure everyone in your family who is eligible gets a flu shot. When you go to the pediatrician for flu shots, wait in the well waiting room to avoid germs from sick patients.

### EAT A HEALTHY DIET

Encourage everyone in your family to eat well. Include plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables in family meals, even if they are harder to come by during the winter months. Frozen produce is just as nutritious as fresh.

Make sure everyone drinks plenty of liquids. If your child doesn’t want to drink cold water when it’s cold out, try hot water—though not boiling—with a squeeze or two of lemon and a squirt of honey.

### GET ENOUGH SLEEP

Enforce age-appropriate bedtimes. Help your child manage her homework load, social life, and activities, making sure she isn’t staying up late trying to get everything done. If she tends to stay up late texting or instant messaging, collect all electronic communication devices before bedtime.

### STAY ACTIVE, BUT NOT TOO ACTIVE

Don’t let couch-potato syndrome set in during the chilly months. Make sure everyone has opportunities to exercise and get fresh air. At the same time, make sure your child has time for free play and relaxation. Avoid



overscheduling and rushing from one activity to another. Stress can make people more likely to catch colds.

### BE PREPARED

Understand that despite these precautions, your child may still become sick. Downplay the importance of perfect attendance and keep your child home if he’s too sick to go to school.

Make a plan to take care of your child while she is out of school. Knowing what you’ll do if and when your child becomes sick will reduce your own stress. ■