

## 4 Smart Ways to Enjoy More Fruit and Veggie Snacks

You probably already know how good fruits and vegetables are for your health. However, you may not know just HOW good-for-you produce really is. For busy moms, the answer is clear: Eating more fruits and veggies is one of the smartest food moves you can make. Recent research confirms that eating more whole fruits and vegetables is one of the best ways to reduce your risk of getting diabetes and heart disease (by as much as 60%!). Naturally low calorie and mostly fat-free, produce is good for your waistline too. If you're concerned about brainpower (at work or home), green leafy veggies are a must-eat treat. They have been shown to slow cognitive decline in older adults.

### Enjoy FRESH fruit and vegetable snacks.

It's no secret that fresh fruit and veggies provide a nutrition boost for everyone in your family. But, how can you get them to eat more produce snacks? The answer is in plain sight. That's right; just keep bright, beautiful produce right where everyone can easily grab it for snacks-on-the-run. Keep a bowl of fresh, just ripe whole fruit in the center of your kitchen or dining table. Keep small bags of fresh veggie snacks (carrots, celery sticks, and broccoli florets) at eye level in the fridge.

### Enjoy DRIED fruit and vegetable snacks.

Dried fruit is the perfect snack-to-go. It doesn't need refrigeration - and it never makes a squishy mess in your backpack or purse. Choose dried fruit with little or no added sugar: apples, apricots, blueberries, and raisins are often dried with just their own natural sweetness. Add dried fruit to trail mix or to fresh fruit salads for a splash of color and a healthy dose of nutrients. Dried beans and peas count as veggies, so look for crunchy dried soybean, pea, and chickpea snacks.

### Enjoy CANNED fruit and vegetable snacks.

Canned fruits make appealing, quick, and inexpensive snacks. Enjoy fruits canned in juice or, like natural applesauce, made without added sugar. Divide larger cans into smaller portions in reusable plastic containers or take advantage of the convenience in single serve containers of canned fruits, such as mandarin oranges, pineapple chunks, and applesauce. Canned beans make zesty snack dips when mixed with other veggies, such as canned corn and spicy salsa.

### Enjoy FROZEN fruit and vegetable snacks.

Frozen fruits are often less expensive than the fresh varieties. Frozen strawberries, raspberries, and blueberries can be purchased in large bags; then used as small handfuls for yogurt toppings or as smoothie ingredients. Frozen bars made from 100% fruit and juice (commercial or make-your-own) are a sweet and refreshing treat on hot summer days. Like their canned cousins, frozen vegetables are delicious when microwaved quickly and added to bean/salsa dip combinations.

**HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT DASH?** The DASH (*Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension*) eating plan has been shown to lower high blood pressure and, in an April 2008 study, to reduce the risk of heart disease in women. DASH is rich in fruits, vegetables, and reduced fat dairy products. Read more about DASH eating plans at the Oregon Dairy Council site ([www.oregondairycouncil.org/dash/](http://www.oregondairycouncil.org/dash/)) and download dozens of delicious DASH recipes, including several smart snack ideas, from the Mayo Clinic at [www.mayoclinic.com/health/dash-diet-recipes/RE00089](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/dash-diet-recipes/RE00089)