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“Mom, can I have a snack?”, “I’m hungry”, “Dad, can I have some candy? I want candy!” These are sentences I heard this weekend from my own child. It seems he always wants a snack! Although his snacks of choice are gummy bears and chocolate, those are NOT the best choices, no matter what he tells me. I want to share some healthier options for the snack monster in your life. These are even good small bites for adults, especially for those watching their caloric intake.

When choosing snacks, choose multiple food groups to get the most bang for your buck. Fruits and vegetables are often the most neglected food groups, so I will focus on those today.

A lot of kids don’t like to eat their vegetables. Here are a few options:

1. Celery sticks with peanut butter and raisins
2. Carrots with hummus or ranch
3. Baked sweet potatoes with applesauce
4. Cottage cheese with tomatoes
5. Black bean quesadillas with whole-wheat tortillas

At least for my kids, fruits are an easier sell. Here are some ideas:

1. Apple slices with peanut butter
2. Whole-wheat toast with sliced bananas
3. Low-fat yogurt with blueberries and strawberries
4. Grapes with pretzels (be sure to cut the grapes lengthwise if serving to child under 5!)
5. Fresh fruit in an ice cream cone

As you can see, there are a lot of snacks that aren’t pre-packaged, processed foods. I suggest that you make a list of some family favorites so healthy snacking is easier. I want to end with an idea I keep in my back pocket for fruit and veggie emergencies – SMOOTHIES. I use low-fat yogurt, frozen kale or spinach, and whatever fruit I have on hand. Throw it in a blender, call it dessert, and check off a few servings of fruits, vegetables, and dairy.

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