

# Healthy Celebrations



## It adds up!

These party snacks add 550 calories!



## Happy, Healthy Holidays

### Rethinking parties for young children

There are so many reasons to celebrate in child care! All of the holidays and birthdays can mean a lot of parties, which can also mean a lot of junk food. One regular sized frosted cupcake and a juice box adds up to 550 calories. This is more than a third of the calories that children should eat in a whole day! Sweets and snacks are okay sometimes, but healthy treats and active games can also make for a fun party that promotes the healthy lessons you try to teach every day. Instead of adding to the junk food

landscape, we want to teach children healthy habits they can carry through life. Do this by moderating the junk food and dialing up healthy treats, active games, and other fun at parties.

## Shifting to Healthier Parties

### How to Make the Switch

- Choose a time to make the transition, such as a new school year, and let everyone know well in advance
  - ▶ Distribute written guidelines so everyone can understand the new policy
  - ▶ Don't be shy about enforcing your policy. Let teachers know that they can go to the director or another appointed person for help
- Change can be tough for everyone! Express thanks to those who comply with policies and try to remain positive and patient

### Healthier Party Planning Tips

- Focus on Fun!—food does not have to be the main event. Try adding games and crafts to parties with one healthy snack.
- Decide what foods are allowed at the celebration and post them on a sign-up sheet for parents
  - ▶ Ask parents for input on healthier foods and games. Offer inspiration with a Pinterest board!
  - ▶ If sugary treats show up, be prepared to wrap them up in sandwich bags or plastic wrap and send them home

## Healthy Parties Help Children!

### Better for Brains

Well-nourished children can learn and behave better.

### Provide Consistent Messages

Providing healthy classroom celebrations demonstrates a school commitment to promoting healthy behaviors.

### Opportunities for Active Play

Introducing fun themed activities can get children's heart rate up. For example, a pumpkin relay or a dance party.



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## Ideas for Healthy Parties All Year Long!

Creating festivity with active games and healthy snacks

### September

It's a new school year! Share new healthy celebration policies with families.

- ▶ Try a tasting party. Offer children small portions of a fun new fruit or vegetable. Ask them to use their senses to describe it.

### October

Arrange a parade for children in costume, or hold a costumed "Monster Mash" dance party.

#### Halloween Healthy Party Snacks:



- ▶ Banana ghosts and tangerine pumpkins
- ▶ Cheese cut into cat or bat shapes with cookie cutters on whole-grain crackers
- ▶ Apples with yogurt dip

### November

Set up a "fill the cornucopia" relay race.

#### Thanksgiving Healthy Party Snacks:

- ▶ Turkey roll-ups with whole wheat tortillas
- ▶ Spread apple butter on whole grain English muffins or graham crackers
- ▶ Pumpkin dip with vanilla yogurt, cinnamon, and nutmeg with graham crackers
- ▶ Baked sweet potato "fries."

### December & January

Bundle up and run around outside! For indoor fun, use paper plates for "ice skating."



#### Winter Holiday Healthy Party Snacks:

- ▶ Cottage cheese snowmen
- ▶ Fruit kebabs with alternate red and green fruits

### February

Play a jumping or other vigorous game. Then ask them to feel their hearts beating. Talk about keeping hearts healthy and happy with activity and healthy food.

#### Valentine's Day Healthy Party Snacks:

- ▶ Cherry tomatoes and red peppers with hummus
- ▶ Heart-shaped sandwiches cut with cookie cutters
- ▶ Strawberries, raspberries, dried cranberries, pomegranate or apple slices

### March

Clear some space indoors or outside. Have children act out a story you read.

#### St. Patrick's Day Healthy Party Snacks:

- ▶ Try "green eggs and ham." In a blender, combine shelled eggs and a handful of spinach. Blend and scramble for green eggs!
- ▶ Name all the green fruits and veggies you can think of, and serve some of them at snack

### April & May

Take a nature walk to explore the new springtime growth outdoors.

#### Spring Party Healthy Party Snacks:

- ▶ Carrot muffins
- ▶ Carrots with hummus
- ▶ Spring to life smoothies: 1 cup milk, 1 overripe banana, 2 cups frozen mango and pineapple, and 2 cups fresh spinach



### June

Visit a local farm, community garden, or orchard and discuss what is in season with children.

- ▶ Serve fresh produce from a farmers market or local stand
- ▶ Fresh-fruit popsicles
- ▶ Melon balls in ice cream cone



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## Happy, Healthy Birthdays

### Rethinking parties for young children

Shifting gears from birthday cupcakes to other ways of celebrating may sound daunting. Offer children and families some alternatives to celebrate their day to make the transition easier.

## Shifting to Healthier Birthdays

### How to Make the Switch

- Birthday choices
  - ▶ Give children their choice of books to read at story time
  - ▶ Allow the child to choose his or her favorite active game for the class to play
- Change up the schedule in honor of the birthday
  - ▶ Ask children to bring in a special item to show/share on their birthday
  - ▶ Play fun games such as a birthday beanbag relay
- Give the child special attention
  - ▶ Create a birthday crown for the child to wear
  - ▶ Give children a special tribute with songs
  - ▶ Create a “Celebrate Me” book. Have classmates draw pictures or write words about what they like about the birthday child.
  - ▶ Give children special time with the teacher

### Healthier Party Planning Tips

- Pick a day to celebrate all the birthdays of the month
- Small-size portions and miniature treats can be paired with healthier options
- Feature active games during parties so children can get active and feel the festivity
- Decorations and music add life to any party!

## Healthy Parties Help Children!

### Cake overload!

This may be one of many parties. Children may have a birthday party at school, with friends, and with family. Minimizing high-calorie food and drinks at school celebrations is one way to moderate.

Adapted from:  
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