

Simple summer snacks help keep kids healthy

By Callie Miller

As the weather gets hot and the kids are out of school, it's time for parents to think about the summer menu. Kids need snacks to sustain their high energy levels and to stay well hydrated, especially while being active in hot weather.

A balanced summer snack includes lots of fruit and veggies, which have natural hydration and vitamin C to protect against damage from sunburns.

It's important to incorporate some complex carbohydrates from fruits and grains to sustain children's high energy. Adding protein to snacks is important to help replenish their busy bodies.

Help them stay well-nourished this summer with these fun and easy snack ideas:

- **Watermelon Popsicles:** Blend watermelon, strawberries and a touch of honey together in a blender. Pour into popsicle molds and freeze.
- **Cherry Tomato & Cheese Kabobs:** On a kabob stick, string together cherry tomatoes and cubed cheese (flavor of choice). Make it your own by adding other chopped fruits or veggies.
- **Veggie Pinwheels:** Spread cream cheese onto a whole-grain wrap. Add your favorite veggies, sliced into strips. Roll up the wrap, then slice the wrap into 4 smaller pieces, or "pinwheels."
- **Frozen Yogurt Bark:** Spread 2 cups of vanilla Greek yogurt onto parchment paper, placed on a baking sheet. Top with blueberries, strawberries and blackberries. If desired, add other toppings such as chopped nuts or chocolate chips. Freeze for 4 hours, then break the frozen yogurt pieces apart.
- **Rainbow Veggie Sticks & Dip:** Cut red, yellow and green bell peppers, carrots and cucumbers into strips. For the dip, mix together Greek yogurt or cottage cheese with 1/2 teaspoon each of garlic and onion powder, a dash of salt, and dried dill if desired.
- **Peach Salsa:** Chop up one peach and one tomato, add to a bowl. Toss in 1/4 c. chopped cilantro, 1 tablespoon lime juice, 1 minced garlic clove and salt and pepper to taste. Serve with tortilla chips or veggie sticks.
- **Frozen Grapes:** Thoroughly wash grapes under cold water. Pat dry with a paper towel. Then add the grapes to a gallon-sized bag. Store in the freezer for 4-8 hours, until grapes are frozen. Eat them straight from the freezer, or pop into a smoothie to add flavor and ice.

These creative and simple ideas will keep your kids happy and energized throughout the long, hot days of summer. Enjoy them by the pool, at the park or bring them to your next family picnic. It's all about finding the perfect blend of nutrition, hydration, and the fun flavor your kids deserve.

Callie Miller is a registered dietitian with RiverStone Health WIC (Women, Infants and Children) nutrition program. If you have children under age 5, you are pregnant or are a new mom, your family may be eligible for healthy food assistance through WIC. Call 406-247-3370 to learn more.