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KITCHEN MAKEOVER MAKES HEALTHY EATING HASSLE-FREE

"Expecting busy family members to stop and peel a carrot is unrealistic," says Janice Baranowski, a research dietitian with the CNRC's Behavioral Nutrition section. "Snacks need to be quick, easy-to-find and easy-to-eat." To help improve your family's diet, Baranowski offers these kitchen "makeover" tips.

THINK SMALL

Individual portions are most attractive to the "eat-it-now" crowd. Stock up on "grab-and-go" bottles of low-fat milk and water, boxes of 100% fruit juice, easy-to-eat "tubes" of yogurt, low-fat string cheese, and snack bags of mini carrots and a favorite low-fat dip. Pack pantry shelves with mini boxes of raisins. Re-portion packages of whole-wheat crackers into easy-to-grab snack bags.

REMEMBER EASY DOES IT

No-fuss "salad in a bag," easy-to-thaw frozen poultry pieces, grated low-fat cheese, and canned and frozen vegetables cut meal prep time. For quick quesadillas, casseroles and soups, cook extra chicken breasts and whole grains, rice and beans. Freeze in easy-to-thaw portions.

BE OBVIOUS

Keep easy-to-eat fresh fruit on the kitchen counter and snack-size portions of frozen grapes in front of high-fat freezer snacks. Keep pre-cut fruits, ready-to-eat vegetables and a small bowl of favorite low-fat dip on a "front-and center" shelf in the refrigerator.

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SMALL CHANGES ADD UP

Switch to 100% fruit juice, 100% whole-grain bread and ready-to-eat cereals, soft or liquid margarine, and low-fat or fat-free milk and dairy products. Add nuts, seeds or fruit to salads. Serve more fish, poultry and leaner cuts of meat and meals that give center stage to vegetables and grains.

DOWNSIZE TREATS

Help your family by buying smaller packages and limiting snack variety.

ADVERTISE

Develop "in-house promotions," such as a chart that allows each family member to track the number of fruit, vegetable, whole grain servings they eat each day. Establish a non-food reward system and mark daily progress with stamps or stickers.

Source: Nutrition & Your Child volume 3, 2000--USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine

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