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Eating healthy and being physically active can be a fun part of parties and events. More schools are encouraging parents to limit treats brought into schools for special celebrations. Donating a book for the classroom, letting the birthday child choose and lead a fun game or having the child wear a special sash and crown for the day could be some alternatives to unhealthy treats for younger children.

Whether the celebration is for elementary, middle or high school children, parents can support a more active party and offer healthy foods. Here are some suggestions:

Foods and Beverages

- Serve foods with contrasting colors like veggie trays with hummus or low fat dip. Make fruit kabobs that look eye appealing by choosing fruits that represent the colors of the rainbow. Make foods with different shapes using cookie cutters.
- Offer drinks that are low sugar such as fruit juice mixed with seltzer water or club soda, water with fruit slices, low fat or nonfat milk or fruit smoothies.
- Have the party participants engage in making the food they eat. They can create their own pizza using whole grain English muffins, tomato sauce, different veggies, skim mozzarella cheese and lean protein like grilled chicken and ham or they can assemble their own tacos with lean beef, low fat cheese, salsa, lettuce and other veggies.
- Sweet Treats can be offered too. Try making mini cupcakes, fruit muffins, pudding in paper cups with low fat whipped topping, yogurt parfaits or offer small frozen ice cream-type novelties.

Activities

- Activities can range from going to a retail outlet like bowling and roller skating to home activities like soccer, kick ball, volley ball, tag, dancing, miniature golf, table tennis, Hula Hoops, etc.
- Additional activities that match the party theme can make it interesting. For example, a treasure hunt for a Pirates Party.
- Offering activities that are FUN and all children can be successful in participating is key.

Party Bags

Limit candy in party favors for young children. Instead, offer magnets, stickers, book marks, small toys, or colorful pencils, just to name a few.

Parents should be a cheerleader for healthy habits. It is never too early for adults to set an example. Keep in mind that children follow what the adults around them do—even at parties.

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"Create Healthy, Active Celebrations"
www.fns.usda.gov

