



Healthy Celebrations



Celebrating holidays, birthdays, and important accomplishments is a great way to reward hard work, build relationships, and have fun! But too often, celebrations incorporate unhealthy foods such as sodas, cookies, and other sweet indulgences. These well-meant treats can have unintended negative consequences:

- Replacing healthy meals with sugary snacks can cause students to feel first jumpy, then hungry and sluggish, decreasing their ability to focus
- Students with medical and cultural food restrictions can feel excluded; some may even be harmed by eating foods considered off-limits
- Using unhealthy foods as rewards can create negative and unhealthy perceptions about foods
- In the classroom, food spills can create messes and invite pests

Make your parties both fun and healthy by celebrating with these alternatives:

- Games, especially those involving movement
- Stories and interactive activities
- Music, singing, or dancing
- Small toys, stickers, or gifts

If you really want to incorporate food into your school day celebration, suggest healthy alternatives such as fresh or dried fruits, raw vegetables, and other nutritious snacks. Serve these foods after lunch, so students fill up on healthy lunches first. Send foods home, or talk with your head custodian and kitchen manager about holding your party in the lunchroom or other designated food-safe area.



For more great ideas for healthy holiday celebrations, visit the **Healthy Food Choices in Schools Community of Practice:**

www.extension.org/pages/70218/resources-for-promoting-healthy-holiday-fun-in-school