

# WELLSPRING

THE HEALTH MAGAZINE FOR THE JEWISH FAMILY

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My Table  
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# MIX UP YOUR SCHOOL SNACKS WITH TRAIL MIX

Searching for a delicious snack idea that is sure to please even the most particular of your children? Look no further. Trail mix is an A+ snack that should make its debut early on this school year.

**By Esti Asher, MS, RDN, LD**

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For over four years, I taught nutrition education to thousands of students from grades K to 12. We would frequently celebrate the completion of our four-to-six-class curricula with trail mix. My students thoroughly enjoyed the snack (often begging for seconds and thirds) and were even surprised when they tried (and enjoyed!) unfamiliar ingredients that I would include within the mix such as (\*spoiler alert\*) roasted edamame.

The trail mix that I'm referring to is the kind that you create yourself (or it can also be a great activity for your kids to prepare), as opposed to the high-sugar premade options found in stores. Assembling your own trail mix also allows for the flexibility to change it up to appeal to your children's preferences. Have fun and be creative; the end product is customizable and delicious. Aim to include two or three food groups for a well-rounded and nutritionally balanced winning snack for all ages.

Below are six categories of trail mix ingredient suggestions. Just choose, mix, and enjoy!



## Cereal

Cereal is a convenient component of trail mix. I suggest using a low-sugar, whole-grain, high(er)-fiber cereal. This grain component should ideally be a neutral flavor that can support and balance the stronger flavors present in the rest of the mixture.



## Dried fruit

For some sweetness and chewy texture, consider adding dried fruit to your trail mix. There are so many delicious possibilities to explore! You can stick with the basic raisins and dried cranberries, or get more creative with dried apricots, blueberries, or cherries.



## Freeze-dried fruit

A unique alternative (or perhaps addition) to the more popular dried fruit, freeze-dried fruit has a lighter and more airy feel since a higher percentage of water has been removed. Popular freeze-dried fruit options include strawberries and apples. These ingredients offer unique texture and a potential pop of color.



## Seeds

A great way to add protein is by adding nuts and/or seeds. Since many schools are nut-free due to allergies, seeds may be a safer ingredient to include. Shelled sunflower seeds and pumpkin seeds are great trail mix components. Of course, make sure that your child is old enough to eat these ingredients (and all ingredients from this list), as they can be a choking hazard for younger kids.



## Roasted chickpeas or edamame

An additional way to include protein and fiber is by adding a shelf-stable roasted chickpea or roasted edamame snack to the trail mix. This ingredient may be the most adventurous from this list, but is worth introducing to your children (and yourself!). These ingredients have a savory flavor and satisfying crunch, and will add to the satiety factor of your mixture.



## Chocolate chips

For an element of surprise and added sweetness, sprinkle some chocolate chips or cacao nibs into the mix as well. If your child doesn't already feel like they have the coolest snack in the class, the chocolate surprises will seal the deal.

**You can assemble your trail mix in bulk and then portion out as needed or create a different combination each time. And a final tip — always make more than you think you need... this versatile and crowd-pleasing snack may disappear faster than you think. Happy mixing!**

## Want a decreased risk of colorectal cancer?

**Try ditching (or at least reducing) sugar-sweetened beverages.**

We have heard it many times before – sugar-sweetened beverages should be limited because they can negatively affect our health, but is that really true? Our teens (and ourselves) may often be found sipping on Frappuccinos, Slurpees and sodas. The kids are so active and still growing, so maybe the high sugar content gets doesn't make much of a difference? According to new research, not only is that suggestion incorrect, but it's specifically during the time of adolescence that we must be extra careful to limit sugar-sweetened beverages.

Colorectal cancer is an illness that is typically diagnosed during older ages; however, the average age upon diagnosis has decreased, with more cases of early-onset colorectal cancer. In this context, early-onset is referring to a diagnosis before the age of 50. New research from Washington University School of Medicine has linked heavy consumption of high sugar drinks, specifically between the ages of 13–18, to an increased rate of being diagnosed with early-onset colorectal cancer. The population studied were women; the women who drank two or more (8-ounce) drinks per day were twice as likely to develop early-onset colorectal cancer in comparison to women who drank less than one serving each day. There's another reason to emphasize water and other unsweetened drinks while still making sure to stay well-hydrated this summer and all year round.

## Not Just for Digestion

**A prune a day may keep the heart disease away.**

Heart disease is the leading cause of death worldwide. Known as the "silent killer," it's worth putting a lot emphasis on ways to keep your heart healthy. Eating a diet rich with fruits and vegetables, incorporating physical activity, and maintaining a lower stress level are ways to help improve heart health.

A research team from San Diego University has discovered another specific suggestion for improving heart health: eating prunes daily. The study, published by the *Journal of Medicinal Food*, followed healthy, post-menopausal women; the women who ate 5–6 prunes (50 grams) per day over a period of 6 months had an increase in HDL ("good" cholesterol) and therefore a lower ratio of total cholesterol to HDL. The women also had an increase in antioxidant levels and a decrease inflammation, which has countless health benefits. ♡