

## MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES: WEEK 18

# Homemade convenience

Buying small, ready-to-eat packages of food for snacks and lunches saves time, but you definitely pay extra for the convenience. Try making these foods at home. It probably won't take as long as you expect, it'll give your family more options and you'll save money too!

### Fruit cups

Fruit cups are a packed lunch favorite, but store-bought varieties usually have a lot of added sugar, which is another great reason to try making your own at home. Look for fresh fruit that's in season (when it's cheapest), and divide it into half-cup servings. If the fruit you want isn't in season and seems a bit pricey, buy large containers of frozen or canned fruit (look for fruit canned in 100-percent juice), then portion it into half-cup servings.

### Veggies & dip

Choose a variety of vegetables that your family enjoys such as carrots, celery, bell peppers, snap peas, cauliflower, broccoli and mushrooms. Wash, cut, and package the veggies. For the dip, try hummus, cottage cheese, black bean dip or ranch dip made with Greek or plain yogurt (try low-fat). Buy large containers of dip and then divide it into portions for the week ahead.

### Yogurt with fruit & nuts

Many flavored yogurts (including the fruit flavors) contain a lot of added sugar. Try buying a large container of plain yogurt instead, and separating it into smaller portions. Add flavor and crunch to each container with fruit and nuts such as almonds or walnuts. Use fresh, canned or frozen fruit.

### What about containers?

Always choose food-safe containers. Beyond that, experiment to find the containers that work best for you and your family. Try small, sealable plastic containers for homemade fruit cups. Try using sealable plastic bags for nuts or homemade trail mix. Sealable jars come in many sizes and could be great for small portions of dip. You don't have to buy a bunch of new containers – just use whatever food-safe containers you have on hand.



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### Did you know?

Your kids will be more likely to eat homemade convenience foods if you let them choose and prepare some of the ingredients. Give them a range of nutritious ingredients to choose from.

## WEEKLY RECIPE

Remember to wash your hands and prepare food safely.

### Cheesy Bean Dip (serves 6)

1. Drain and rinse **1 cup black beans**, **½ cup great northern white beans** and **½ cup red kidney beans**.
2. Add all beans, **¼ cup no-salt-added, diced tomatoes** (drained), **2 tablespoons lemon juice**, **2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar**, **1 teaspoon coriander**, **1 teaspoon cumin**, **1 teaspoon onion powder**, **½ tablespoon garlic powder**, and **½ tablespoon chili powder** to a blender or food processor and puree until smooth.
3. Divide into six containers with lids and sprinkle each with **1 teaspoon grated parmesan cheese**.
4. Store in refrigerator next to portion-sized bags of vegetable sticks for afterschool snacks or toss into family lunches.



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Recipe adapted from United States Department of Agriculture. (2015). *Eating Right Is Simple Recipe Set*.

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