Apples often are used as the symbol for health for good reason. Eating more apples as part of an overall healthful diet may help lower our risk for diabetes, heart disease, stroke, cancer and even asthma, according to some studies. Apples are a good source of fiber, vitamins and minerals.

In the U.S., we often have many types of apples to choose from in grocery stores. Apples are “on-the-go” snacks with less than 100 calories per medium apple. Visit www.ag.ndsu.edu/fieldtofork and click on “Learn More …,” then “Apples” for more information about selecting, preparing and preserving apples. Check out all the other fruit and vegetable links, too.

Try These Tips:

- **Add apples to your recipes.** Rinse apples under cool, running water. Slice into prepared oatmeal, over lettuce salads or blend into smoothies. Grate some apple into your favorite muffins or quick breads.

- **Bake apples as a quick dessert (with fewer calories than apple pie).** Remove the core to create a “well” in each medium-sized apple. For each apple, mix 1 tablespoon brown sugar, 1 tablespoon rolled oats, and a sprinkle of cinnamon and nutmeg. Pack mixture into the apple “well” and add 2 to 3 tsp. of butter or margarine to the top of the stuffed apple. Place apples in baking dish. Add a small amount of hot water in an 8- by 8-inch baking dish (1 cup for four apples). Cover the top of pan with aluminum foil and bake at 375 F for 40 to 50 minutes (until apples are tender).

- **Make homemade applesauce.** Select full-flavored apples. Wash apples, peel if desired, core and slice. To each quart of apple slices, add a cup of water; cook until tender. Mash or puree (in blender) and add ½ cup sugar, if desired, for each quart of hot puree, stirring until dissolved. Cool and package in freezer containers or bags. Seal and freeze. For easy stacking, freeze the bags of applesauce on a tray.

- **Freeze apple slices.** Select firm, crisp, full-flavored apples. Wash, peel and core. Slice medium apples into twelfths and large sizes into sixteenths. To prevent apples from darkening during preparation, dissolve ½ teaspoon ascorbic acid (found in the canning section of grocery stores) in 3 tablespoons water. Sprinkle over the fruit. Place treated slices in a single layer in a steamer basket; steam 1½ to two minutes, depending on thickness of the slices. Cool in ice cold water; drain. Pack apples into freezer bags or containers. Press fruit down and leave about ½ inch at the top to allow for expansion during freezing. Seal and freeze. See “Freezing Fruits” (FN182) at www.ag.ndsu.edu/foodpreservation/freeze for more information.

- **Dry apples or make fruit leather for snacks.** See “Drying Fruits” (FN1587) and “Making Fruit Leathers” (FN1586) at www.ag.ndsu.edu/foodpreservation/dry for free directions.
My kids are always ready for a snack after school. How big of a snack do they need?

Growing kids need a couple of small snacks in addition to balanced meals to fuel their growth and development. Try to keep snacks in the 100- to 200-calorie range and time them so they aren’t close to the main meal. Most children (and adults) do not consume enough fruits, vegetables or whole grains. For example, a bananas, apple, carrot sticks with hummus, celery sticks with peanut butter and raisins, or a few whole-grain crackers with salsa are excellent snacks that help fill nutrition gaps. Be sure they see you eating (and enjoying) healthful snacks.

Apple Peanut Butter* Nachos

- 2 medium apples
- 2 Tbsp. peanut butter
- 2 tsp. honey
- 1½ Tbsp. semisweet dark chocolate chips
- Shredded coconut (optional)

Slice apples and arrange on a serving dish or plate. Combine peanut butter and honey in a small bowl. Place in microwave for about 10 seconds (enough so that it can drizzle). Drizzle over apples. Top with chocolate chips or coconut if desired.

* You can use another nut butter such as Sun Butter (made from sunflower seeds) instead of the peanut butter.

Makes four servings.

Each serving has 130 calories, 6 grams (g) fat, 2 g protein, 21 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber and 30 milligrams sodium.

FoodWi$e Tip of the Month

Try making your own snack mixes with kid-friendly ingredients as a money-saving option. Create mixes from dried fruits, whole-grain cereal, bite-size crackers and/or nuts. Invite kids into the kitchen to help assemble the personalized mixes into snack-size zipper-top plastic bags. Keep choking risks and food allergies in mind as you choose the ingredients.

Visit www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/foods/fn1753.pdf for a free guide that shows you how to make your own healthful snack mixes.

Just for Fun

How do you make an apple turnover?

Push it downhill.

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