

Just Try it

On the Road

Tips for Smart Vacation Nutrition

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Vacations are all about splurging – no dinner to prepare, no dishes to wash, no emails to answer, no appointments or schedules to keep and plenty of food. Don't deny yourself these pleasures, but my advice is to find a healthy balance for you and your kids when it comes to food indulgences.

Depending on whether you are taking a road trip or traveling by air, there are many great strategies that can keep healthy eating a priority most of the time. Having a game plan is key. So while you're making a packing list, create a food list, too. If you're traveling by car, pack an insulated cooler of healthy foods. The options are plentiful when you have the ability to keep foods cold. Some healthy options include:

- Drinks: water, milk boxes
- Finger fruits: grapes, strawberries, bananas
- Dried fruits: raisins, cranberries, apricots, cherries, blueberries, apples
- Finger vegetables: carrots, jicama, cherry tomatoes, snap peas, celery
- Snacks: popcorn, pretzels, rice cakes, whole grain crackers, string cheese, nuts and seeds (for children over 4 years old)

Once you arrive at your destination, the cooler can be re-stocked and used for day trips. Freeze some extra water bottles to use as ice packs, and drink them as they thaw later in the day.

If traveling by plane, pack a lunch bag for each child with individual servings of snacks that are non-perishable. Some examples include:

- Dried fruits, finger vegetables
- Low-sugar cereals (less than 6 grams of sugar)
- DIY trail mix (cereal, dried fruit, nuts)
- Whole grain crackers (2-3 grams fiber)
- Healthy snack bars
- Beef or turkey jerky, nuts
- Select snack bars made with whole foods, such as dried fruit, nuts and whole grains.

If eating a meal at the airport, look for restaurants that offer fruit, salads and entrees that are baked, not fried. While on the plane, encourage your child to drink mostly water, avoid soda and limit juice to one serving. If you're traveling within the United States, pack an extra supply of healthy snacks in your

suitcase to have on hand during your trip, or find a grocery store near your hotel to stock up on healthy items for snacks or a quick, in-room breakfast. Regardless of how or where you take a vacation, the following strategies support a healthy vacation without excessive attention to food.

- Make five servings of fruits and vegetables a daily goal for the whole family. For example, include fruit as part of breakfast, lunch and snacks. Order a vegetable or two at the dinner meal.
- Limit food indulgences to one a day. For example, if you're at the beach and everyone wants ice cream, that's great. Enjoy the treat together and make that the dessert choice for the day.
- Limit soda and sweet drinks. If your child wants a sweet drink, tell her this choice will be her dessert option for the day. This strategy helps kids understand that sweet drinks are not the same as milk or water and are equivalent to dessert.

If previous vacations have been all about splurging, consider having a conversation with the whole family ahead of time to set the expectations and increase the odds it will be successful. Vacations often include foods and activities that are not a part of our usual routine, which adds to the fun. However, having a few healthy strategies in place can prevent excessive indulgences that wreak havoc on digestion and leave everyone feeling sluggish by the end of the trip. Wishing you happy, healthy travels!

Jill West, RDN, is an accomplished speaker and author of *400 MOMS: Discover What 400 Nutrition Experts Feed Their Kids*. As a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and Certified Health Coach with a private practice in Lafayette, she has worked with thousands of individuals and families helping them make healthy lifestyle changes that are practical and realistic for the whole family. Jill lives in the East Bay with her husband and three boys. For more information, visit www.400MOMS.com