

# Healthy Snacking: Energy Bites

Snack choices for kids may not always be nutritious ones. The supermarket shelves are flooded with boxes and bags of irresistible treats loaded with refined grains, added sugars, and saturated fat. In our busy culture, there are times when snacks are used as a substitute for a well-balanced meal. Providing our kids with nutritious options is important for their growth, but finding something tasty that's also easy to prepare can be a challenge. The new trend of making and eating energy bites is a perfect solution to this snacking dilemma.

Energy bites are a homemade combination of whole grains, nuts and seeds, dried fruit, and other ingredients rolled together into a little ball of deliciousness. They require no cooking, so making them is a terrific activity in which to have kids participate. Not only is it fun, but research has shown that when children have a hand in the food preparation process, they are more likely to eat what they make.

Start with this basic formula to create your own energy bites, or try one of the sample recipes featured in this chart.

When making your own energy bites, you can choose a binder ingredient such as nut butter

or Nutella, and real maple syrup, agave, or honey as sources of sweeteners. The add-in list is never-ending with ingredients such as flax seeds, chia seeds, dried cranberries, raisins, chopped nuts, cocoa powder, chocolate chips (for a treat), shredded coconut, and chopped dates. You can choose more than one add-in by making the total amount of add-ins equal to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a cup. For an extra kick of flavor, experiment with adding a pinch of spice, such as cinnamon, nutmeg, or cayenne pepper.

Once you have your ingredients selected, place them all in a large bowl and mix until blended. Using your hands, roll one tablespoon of the mixture into a ball and place it onto a cookie sheet lined with waxed paper. Repeat with the rest of the mixture. Place the tray in the freezer for one hour. Remove and enjoy. Save the leftovers in a sealable container, either in your refrigerator or freezer, depending on the texture you prefer.

Energy bites can be eaten in place of granola bars, cookies or any other snack, and they provide an array of vitamins, minerals, and fiber in each delicious morsel!

*By Beth Rosen, MS, RD, CDN*

Energy Bites Formula	Sample Recipe	Sample Recipe
1 cup quick oats	1 cup quick oats	1 cup quick oats
1/2 cup binder	1/2 cup sunflower butter	1/2 cup peanut butter
3/4 cup add-ins	1/2 cup chia seeds	1/2 cup mini chocolate chips
	1/4 cup dried cherries	1/4 cup ground flax seed
1/3 cup sweetener	1/3 cup honey	1/3 cup maple syrup

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