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ADMINISTRATIVE AIDE

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NEBLINE

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5 ways to make a healthier trail mix

Kayla Colgrove
MS, RDN, ACSM-CPT
Extension Educator

Looking for a snack that is simple and healthy? Trail mix is a perfect snack to eat on the go or at home. It does not require refrigeration, so it can be tucked away in your office desk drawer or packed in a bag when you need a quick snack. Be careful though, some trail mix recipes may not be healthy. When making a homemade trail mix, you are in control of the ingredients. Follow these five strategies to make a healthier trail mix.

Choose whole grains

Whole grain cereals with low amounts of sugar or air-popped popcorn make a great addition to a healthy trail mix. Whole grains are healthier than refined grains since they are packed with the following nutrients: zinc, magnesium, B vitamins and fiber.

Look for products that include a whole grain stamp or whole-grain ingredients such as brown rice, buckwheat, bulgur, millet, oatmeal, popcorn, quinoa, rolled oats, whole-grain barley, whole-grain corn, sorghum, whole-grain triticale, whole oats, whole wheat and wild rice.

Add dried fruit

Dried fruit can help you reach your daily recommendation of fruits. A 1/2 cup of dried fruit can be considered as 1 cup from the Fruit Group. Dried fruit is naturally sweet, so remember to avoid products that include added sugars such as sugar or corn syrup in the ingredient list to avoid extra calories.

Include protein

Snacks high in protein may help provide satiety and appetite



Cienna Woods, Pixabay

control. Include your favorite nuts and seeds to add protein to your mix. My favorites would include almonds, cashews, pumpkin seeds or sunflower seeds. Buy them unsalted to help keep your sodium intake low!

Dash of sweet

A lot of people like a sweet and salty trail mix. Including a dash of sweet can be part of a healthy snack, in moderation. My favorite sweet to add is dark chocolate because it has antioxidants that may help to lower blood pressure and LDL cholesterol. Choose dark chocolate that has at least 70% cocoa in order to receive the most health benefits with not as much fat and sugar as other chocolates. Otherwise, you can include a dash of candy coated chocolates.

Remember portion control

Depending on your ingredients, calories can add up fast and the trail mix can turn into a high-calorie snack. Nuts and seeds have a lot of calories, but provide many nutrients and healthy fats. Candy has a lot of empty calories, which are calories from solid fats and/or added sugars that provide little or no nutrients.

Choosing higher calorie ingredients means you have to pay attention to portion size. Snacks usually range from 100-200 calories. Don't forget to eat the right portion size that fits your calorie needs. A 1/4 cup of trail mix will usually provide you with the right amount of calories and nutrients to make it a healthy snack.

Check out
<http://food.unl.edu>
for more recipes and healthy tips

- Online newsletters • Blogs
- PowerPoints & handouts • More!



RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Kayla Colgrove, MS, RDN, ACSM-CPT, Extension Educator

TRAIL MIX

(Makes 32 Servings)

- 4 cups Whole Grain Cereal
- 1 cup Dried Cranberries
- 1/2 cup Raisins
- 1/2 cup Banana Chips
- 1 cup Almonds
- 1 cup Dark Chocolate Chips

1. Add all ingredients in a large bowl.
2. Stir to mix.
3. Pour 1/4 cup trail mix into a snack-size storage bag.

KAYLA'S NOTES:

- I like to use Quaker Oatmeal Squares for the whole grain cereal.
- Feel free to make substitutions with your favorite ingredients.



Kayla Colgrove, Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County

Nutrition Information per serving (1/4 cup): Calories 107, Total Fat 5g, Saturated Fat 1g, Cholesterol 0mg, Sodium 35 mg, Total Carbohydrate 17g, Dietary Fiber 2g, Sugars 9g, Protein 2g