



Eco-Healthy Child Care®



Eco-Healthy Child Care® helps early childhood learning environments to be as healthy, safe and green as possible by reducing children's exposure to toxic chemicals.

Healthy Food for Healthy Celebrations

Celebration Is Important

Special occasions are an important part of a child's social development. Rituals to celebrate birthdays, new classmates, graduations and holidays are opportunities to share and learn about other communities and cultures. When food is part of a celebration, it's an opportunity to support healthy eating habits by serving fresh fruits and vegetables or healthy snacks. Here are some tips to ensure that celebrations are as healthy for young bodies as they are for young minds.

Healthy Celebration Activities

1. Arrange a field trip to a local park, library, or museum to celebrate special occasions, taking along lunch or healthy snacks.
2. Share the child's favorite book as a special story time event, or organize a scavenger hunt.
3. Honor a child by planting organic herbs or veggies that will provide yummy tastings later.
4. Create a ritual: What makes a special occasion "special" is that it doesn't happen often. A celebration ritual—ringing a gong, doing a special dance, or wearing a special hat can make an occasion memorable.

5. Offer a no-cal "treat". Create celebrations that are about sharing: soap bubbles for blowing, whistles for tweeting, ribbons for twirling or homemade play dough for sculpting.

Develop a "Celebrations Policy"

A "celebrations policy," perhaps as part of a food wellness policy, can help families, staff and teachers agree on guidelines to make celebrations about fun rather than extra un-healthy food. In addition to healthy snack suggestions and activity ideas, a policy may include these procedures:

- Plan ahead to consolidate birthdays and other celebrations into weekly, bi-weekly or monthly events.
- Schedule celebrations around routine meal & snack times, so that healthy and nutritious treats are not added calories.
- Share monthly special event schedules with parents, setting clear expectations for them to provide craft or activity ideas.
- Publish your policy and tips for how to implement it in a newsletter, emails and/or parent handbooks.
- Ensure children with food allergies and sensitivities have alternative celebratory food choices available.

Healthy tip: Ask families to refrain from packing candy and sugary sweets in their children's lunches.

Healthy Options for Snacks & Treats

1. Fresh fruit kebabs: Local, organic or pesticide-free fresh fruits are a nutritious alternative to sugary treats. Serve chunks of fruit on skewers with plain, nonfat yogurt for dipping.
2. Local, organic or pesticide-free vegetables: Make them special by taking time to arrange them or cut them into fun shapes.
3. Choose local frozen produce in the off-season. Cooked sweet potatoes are usually a hit with kids, as are local berries.

4. Cool drinks: On hot summer days, offer cold water flavored with fresh lemon, lime, or cucumber slices. This is refreshing without added sugar.

5. Warm drinks: On frosty autumn and winter days, celebrate with apple cider. Have children add apple or pear slices, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves or vanilla to warm cider and steep for five minutes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call: 202-543-4033, ext. 13
Email: info@ecohealthychildcare.org
Visit: www.cehn.org/ehcc

Healthy Celebration Ideas

- ✓ Model [wellness policies](http://www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org) for schools, as developed by the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity: www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org
- ✓ A list of [children's story books](http://childrensbooks.about.com/od/holidays/Holidays.htm) with holiday themes, for special celebration story hours: childrensbooks.about.com/od/holidays/Holidays.htm
- ✓ [Craft and activity](http://www.dltk-holidays.com) ideas for holidays and special days: www.dltk-holidays.com
- ✓ [Seasonal ideas](http://cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/policy_options_healthycelebrations.html) for healthy celebrations and other nutrition information from Center for Science in the Public Interest: cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/policy_options_healthycelebrations.html
- ✓ Sample grade school [healthy celebration policy](http://www.vasaelementary.com/?page_id=203) at Valley Arts & Sciences Academy: www.vasaelementary.com/?page_id=203

A recipient of EPA's Children's Environmental Health Excellence Award in 2006, Eco-Healthy Child Care® (EHCC) is a national program that seeks to improve the environmental health of children by partnering with child care professionals to eliminate or reduce environmental health hazards found in child care facilities. Originally created by the Oregon Environmental Council in 2005, EHCC is now managed by Children's Environmental Health Network.

Eco-Healthy Child Care®
c/o Children's Environmental Health Network
110 Maryland Ave. NE Suite 402 | Washington, DC 20002
202.543.4033, ext. 13