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Send Good Nutrition in Your Care Package

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FROM BLOG: Nutrition Tidbits - HealthCastle - Fun and practical diet tips from the largest online nutrition community run by Registered Dietitians - HealthCastle.com

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For a homesick college student, there's nothing more comforting than a care package from home. The trouble is, the chewy homemade chocolate chip cookies so commonly found in student care packages might be sending more than love - they may be giving that lonely student a jump-start to the "Freshman 15."



A box full of love doesn't have to contain a huge dose of sugar and fat. These days, food manufacturers have packaged just about every food you could wish to buy into single servings. The trick to putting together a healthy student care package is navigating the dizzying array of single serving foods to find those that are not simply small servings of empty calories, but those that have some good nutrition too.

Healthy Student Care Package 101

1. Trail Mix In the grocery store there are so many variations, but your best bet is to make your own. Creating your own mix allows you to avoid "pseudo healthy" blends containing items like saturated-fat-laden yogurt-coated pretzels.

2. Subway Cash Card Since you can't ship dinner in your healthy student care package, send the next best thing. Subway offers a menu brimming with healthy choices, and free dinner is tops for a cash-strapped college student.

3. Granola Bars Don't think your favorite student has time to hit the cafeteria for breakfast? A granola bar to toss into a book bag makes a quick breakfast stand-in. Look for whole grain bars (whole grain is listed as the first ingredient) that are low in saturated and trans fat.

4. Nuts Look for individually packaged nuts in the grocery store to tuck along in your healthy student care package. Full of heart-healthy monounsaturated fat and a great source protein, these healthy snacks can keep the all-night study sessions going much longer than a candy bar.

5. Dark Chocolate Covered Raisins We won't try to fool you - chocolate covered raisins are not health food; but what's a care package without a little something decadent? This selection is a better choice for an occasional treat because it's lower in fat than most chocolate candies, and has the redemptive value of fruit and antioxidant-rich dark chocolate.

6. Air Popped Popcorn Who knew this filling whole grain snack could double as great packing material? Pop up a batch, season lightly with a bit of salt and a shake of spice (chili powder and cayenne) and pack in resealable plastic bags. Voila! You've got an edible cushion for your snacks.

The Bottom Line Use your imagination to look beyond the typical treats for something healthy. Whole grain snacks, dried fruit, and nuts make the best choices. With your healthy student care package, you'll sleep better knowing you've sent something to help counter the inevitable late night pizza and pop.

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