

How to Pack Healthy School Lunches-

Children do best in school when they have the proper nutrition to provide energy to feel good throughout the day and to do well in school. The lunch should at least provide 3 of the food groups to supply protein, fat, carbohydrates and nutrients that they need throughout the day. Children should help pack their lunch, if they have input into the lunch, they will be more likely to eat it. Children can help with the shopping and packing the lunch.

The easiest cold school lunch is the sandwich. Here are some ways to mix it up and keep it healthy. Use different whole grain products. Try whole wheat bread, rice cakes, bagels, buns, english muffins tortilla shells and pita bread. In stead of a traditional sandwich, try wraps. Use tortilla shells and spread with cream cheese, layer with lean meats and vegetables or spread with peanut butter and jelly and raisins for a fun treat. Try chicken, egg, or tuna salad for a different sandwich. A hard boiled egg can also provide a protein for a lunch meal.

Sides for the sandwich- try baked chips or pretzels, graham or animal crackers or vanilla wafers, trail mix with nuts, yogurt, string cheese, cottage cheese, granola bars, fig bars, puddings, fresh fruit and vegetables or popcorn.

Cold weather option- try leftover soup in a Thermos. Heat before packing into the Thermos and serve with small roll or whole grain crackers along with some fruit and cheese.

Keep the food safe-

- Encourage the kids to wash hands before eating (can include a moist towelette or hand sanitizer)
- Use an insulated lunch bag and ice pack. Meats, cheeses and milk need to stay cool.
- Add a box of 100% juice or cup of yogurt that has been frozen overnight, it will thaw before lunch to eat and keep the lunch cold.
- Include items that do not need to be kept cold- dried fruit and nuts, peanut butter sandwich, whole grain crackers, fresh fruit (that is washed at home), granola bars and unopened shelf stable pudding

Do not forget a little note to remind your child to enjoy his/her day or just another "Love you" note to make them feel special at lunch time.