

# TIPS FOR HEALTHY SCHOOL LUNCHES

The school year is here – what’s your plan for packing school lunches?

By putting some thought into your children’s lunches, you can help keep them full and able to focus on learning throughout the school day. Here’s how:

## **Rethink the sandwich**

Sandwiches are a staple of school lunches, but they don’t have to be boring or unhealthy.

- Choose bread that is made from whole grains (terms like “100% whole wheat” or “100% whole grain” should be listed first on the ingredients list). Whole grains have nutrients like fiber and can help lower the risk for diabetes.
- Instead of cheese or mayonnaise, try healthier options like avocado and hummus.
- Put sliced apple or pear on a turkey sandwich for an extra serving of fruit.
- Introduce some variety by using whole-wheat tortillas or whole-wheat pita in place of bread.

## **Make fruits and vegetables fun**

Kids need three to four servings of vegetables and two to three servings of fruit each day. Make sure you’re loading up your kids’ lunch boxes with a variety of each.

## **Keep it colorful**

Incorporate fruits and vegetables of different colors, such as red apples, oranges, blueberries and dark leafy greens.

## **Pair with healthy dips**

Hummus is great with vegetables such as green peppers and carrots, while low-fat plain yogurt is a healthy option for fruit like apples and strawberries.

## **Get creative**

Try “bugs on a log.” Use celery sticks or carrots as the “logs” and load them with peanut butter. Then sprinkle your choice of “bugs” – dried cherries, cranberries or raisins – on top to create a fun and tasty snack. Look online for other creative, healthy snack options.

## **Get the kids involved**

Ask your kids what they like. Find out which fruits and veggies are their favorites and be sure to include those more frequently.

### **Don't forget about beverages**

An otherwise-nutritious lunch can be undone if a child washes it down with an unhealthy beverage.

- Encourage your children to drink water throughout the day. Drinking water is essential for good health, and it's a great habit to build early in life.
- Choose low-fat or non-fat milk. Children get the same calcium and nutrients from these but without the added saturated fat and calories.
- Avoid sugary drinks such as soda, sports beverages and even juice (especially if it's not 100-percent juice). They're often loaded with extra sugar and calories and contain little nutritional benefit.