



Lunchbox Nutrition

Teachers are often on the front lines when it comes to observations of students and their lunches sent from home. They observe that students who like their lunches eat more than students who do not like their lunches. They also see that some parents may pack unhealthy lunches they know their child will eat while sacrificing nutrition. It is important to note, however, the difference between a full stomach and a well-nourished child.

More than half of parents disagree with their children over what to pack in the lunch box. 70% of parents are concerned that their children are eating snacks that are not nutritious. Over the years, nutritious lunches have declined. Instead, snack foods are all the rage. Even nutritious drinks like milk are too often replaced with sodas and other less healthy choices. The following tips can help your child get off to a healthy start.

- Ask your children what they want to eat for lunch. Allow kids to make choices. They like to participate in decision-making.
- Plan lunches using the Food Guide. All students learn about the national food guide as part of health instruction. Show them how to put their learning into practice!
- Tempt your child with tasty, nutritious treats.
- Ask your children to help you shop. They may be more likely to eat a well-balanced meal and less likely to trade or throw away an entire food group.
- Stock up on a variety of foods.
- Pick foods that provide fuel. Parents need to give children snacks that are rich in nutrients and keep energy levels high. This will help youngsters perform well in school. Look for foods from the bottom of the Food Guide that are high in carbohydrates, low in fat and contain some protein for energy.
- Planning lunches beforehand with your child will help them learn how to manage their own nutrition later.

How to build a healthy lunch:

Instead of

mayonnaise
potato salad
potato chips
cheddar cheese
cole slaw
bologna

Choose

lite mayo or mustard
fruit salad
pretzels
fat-free cheese
cut raw vegetables
turkey



Suggestions for handling your PICKY EATER:

- Keep introducing new foods over again. Don't avoid it just because they did not like it once, they may change their mind.
- Change your buying habits if you find your child "stuck on" certain unhealthy foods.
- Offer fruits as snacks. Use fruit on its own as dessert or add it to ice cream, pudding or cake. Make your own fruit popsicles (have your child help you, it will have more value to them) out of fresh fruit, yogurt, milk or juice.
- Avoid lots of juices, sodas and milk as substitutes for eating real food.
- Disguise foods and combine foods with those they like and do not like.

Facts to remember:

- Healthy lunches are usually cheaper to put together than less nutritious lunches.
- Having a well-balanced lunch gives you increased and long-lasting energy to be an effective learner in the afternoon.
- Children who do not eat nutritionally-balanced diets, often become picky eaters, develop poor eating habits, have increased rates of childhood obesity, acquire future diet-related diseases such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, and attention deficits.

Bon appétit!