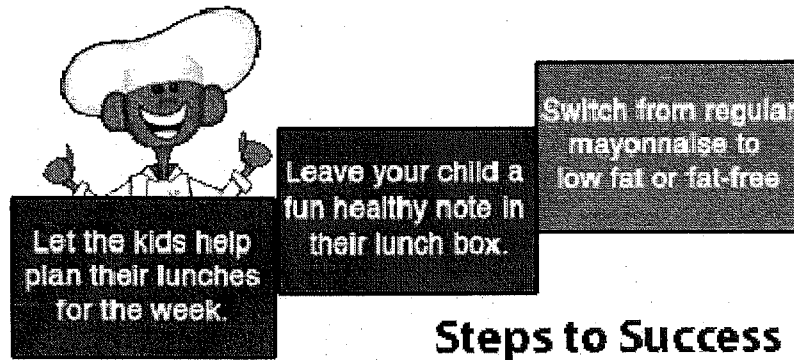


Packing a Healthy Lunch Box...easier than you think!



Do you pack a healthy lunch box for your child? Do you give them money to buy their lunch at school and cross your fingers they select a healthy lunch? Do you buy some pre-packaged, grab and go meals that cost more, and are these even healthy? This article will provide you with some specific ideas that make it easy to create healthy and tasty school lunches that get your child eating healthy.

This is one reason some parents opt for pre-packed lunches that can contain too much fat and sodium. Or maybe you toss in a bag of potato chips – because it feels better knowing your son got something into his tummy. Oh yes, getting your child to eat a nutritious lunch can seem like a battle. But does it have to be? Really? With some easy, quick lunch ideas you can get your child eating a nutritious meal without all the headaches!

The Easy, Fun and Healthy Lunch Box

Get your kids to help you so that healthy lunches are a family affair. It starts by looking to include healthy foods from the five food groups.

Here is a list of healthy lunch ideas for kids:

- Get out the cookie cutters – no not for cookies, but for sandwiches. Kids love food in shapes. You can make a star-shaped sandwiches or even one shaped like a pumpkin. Surprise them with different shapes over the week. Serve sliced ham, chicken, tuna or egg salad sandwiches. Some kids love mustard and mayo but some kids may just want a pickle with it. Go with what your child likes. Similarly, some kids don't like peanut butter but will enjoy cashew or almond butter as a spread.
- Serve sliced meat rolled up into tubes and offer the bread separate (some kids just aren't into sandwiches). Similarly, tuna salad can be offered with crackers. Remember, bread doesn't have to be sliced bread; offer bagels or tortillas. Even just plain sticky rice or couscous can be a hit.

- Toothpicks can add some fun too – kids love bite-sized food. So make a mini-sandwich and place a toothpick in it. You can get toothpicks with fun designs at party stores.
- Other bite-sized food includes cucumber and avocado rolls (many grocery stores now have a section of Japanese food). Or make your own roll: Use Korean roasted seaweed (this has a nice sesame flavor to it) and sticky rice (these are simple versions of kimbap). Just roll up the rice like into a mini-cylinder shape. Have your sons help you make it the night before.
- Tea sandwiches: These are bite-sized sandwiches. Although adult versions usually have spices and onions, you can make your child a cream cheese tea sandwich with very thin cucumber slices. If you want more ideas on tea sandwiches check out: www.cooks.com/rec/search/0,1-0,finger_sandwich_ideas,FF.html
- Use leftovers for school lunch. If your child ate the beef stew last night for dinner, serve it up for lunch. Either use a thermos after heating it up in the morning or just serve it cold (place an ice pack in the lunch box though to prevent food illness).

• Lunch Meal Ideas And The Five Food Groups

Lunch Meal	Vegetable	Fruit	Grains	Dairy	Protein
Sliced ham and cheese sandwich with crunchy vegetable	crunchy vegetable		whole wheat bread	lowfat cheese	ham
tuna salad with fruit slices, milk	green bed of salad	fruit slices		low fat or skim milk	tuna
Peanut butter and banana sandwich, milk and crunchy celery	celery	banana or apples	whole wheat bread	low fat or skim milk	Peanut butter or any nut/soy butter
cucumber pita sandwich, milk, handful of seeds	cucumber		whole wheat pita	low fat or skim milk	seeds
vegetable soup and crackers, milk and handful of nuts	vegetable soup		whole grains crackers	low fat or skim milk	nuts
Rolled sliced meat, cheese cubes, crackers and crunchy veggies	crunchy vegetable		whole grains crackers	lowfat cheese cubes	sliced meat
brown rice and stir fried and diced meat or tofu or beans	stir fried vegetable		brown rice	low fat or skim milk	meat or tofu or beans
Fruits and vegetables with yogurt dip and crackers	vegetables	fruits	whole grains crackers	lowfat yogurt dip	
Whole grains cereal fruit and nuts		fruit	whole grains cereal	low fat or skim milk	Nuts

Bean and cheese burrito with sliced mango	salsa	sliced mango	whole grains tortilla	lowfat cheese	beans
Bagel with lowfat cottage cheese, raisins, nuts and applesauce		raisins, applesauce	whole grains bagel	lowfat cottage cheese	nuts
baked potato, cheese, steamed vegetables, and lean turkey bacon bits, sliced fruit	baked potato with steamed vegetables	sliced fruit		lowfat cheese	lean turkey bacon bits

- Packing a healthy lunch. Make sure you have foods from at least 4 food groups.
- My Plate reminds us that half the plate should be filled with vegetables and fruits. Find different ways to add vegetables to lunch. It can be served over brown rice, part of a sandwich or side salad. Really any way that your child likes!
- Read more about the five food groups:
- Vegetable Food Group - make half of the plate filled vegetables and fruit
- Fruit Food Group - color the plate with different colored fruits and vegetables
- Dairy Food Group - drink or eat lowfat (1%) or fat-free dairy products
- Grains Food Group - make at least half the grains "100% whole grains"
- Protein Food Group - vary the protein and keep it lean!
- Here is a list of foods to pack for lunch organized by food groups. The possibilities are endless, it is really a matter of the foods your child enjoys. Let your child help plan the menu.
- Here are some lunch meals to get you started.

The fun way to learn about nutrition