

# Tips for Packing Healthy Lunches & Snacks



Healthy eating in childhood and adolescence is important for proper growth and development and can prevent health problems such as obesity, dental cavities, iron deficiency, and osteoporosis.<sup>1,2</sup> So, here are a few things to consider when planning a child's meals, and snacks.



## Choose Visually Appealing Foods

We all eat with our eyes. Children are no different. Your child will eat with much more enthusiasm if the meals you make are visually appealing. However, research shows important differences between children and adults. Researchers have found that children are most attracted to lots of items and colour on their plate. They tend to prefer up to six different colours. Adults prefer three. Children are also drawn to fun shapes and to food items they can eat with their hands.

## Add Superfoods To Your Child's Lunch

Superfoods are a great source of essential fats, vitamins, minerals, lean proteins and iron. Some experts advocate introducing children to these kinds of foods early so they can learn to enjoy the tastes and create good eating habits. To help support your child's development and energy levels at school, there are some great superfoods that can be packed in daily. Blueberries, strawberries, bananas, grapes taken off the bunch, granola (oats), cherry tomatoes, apple slices, yogurt, chia seeds and spinach dip all fall into the superfood category.



Serving **Healthy** and **Delicious** Food Children Eat!

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## To Sandwich Or Not To Sandwich

Sandwiches are a great way to include the protein component of lunch. Try a variety of different sandwiches such as egg salad, tuna, hummus & vegetable or a chicken wrap, all of which are all great sources of protein. Some children do prefer a hot lunch over a sandwich and thermos lunches are a great way to add variety and keep children interested. Try adding chicken with pasta or quinoa as an alternative to a sandwich.



## Quick Tips for Packing a Healthy Lunch

- 1 Try and pack a lunch and/or snacks with at least three of the four foods groups (meat and alternatives, fruits and vegetables, grain products, milk and alternatives).
- 2 Try and be creative when packing your child's lunches and snacks. Try packing different items to keep lunch meals exciting for your child.
- 3 Brainstorm ideas together, ask them what they would like to eat. This will help make your meal planning easier, as your child will tell you what they want to be eating and you can do your best to incorporate their preferred food items.
- 4 Have your child help you prepare their lunch and snacks. This helps make your child a part of the lunch preparation process, which can also increase their excitement about mealtime.
- 5 Bring your child grocery shopping and have them help you pick out healthy snack items.
- 6 Don't be afraid to introduce new food items. It can take up to 15 times of introduction before your child decides to try a new food item, so just keep offering.

One of the keys to successful lunch and snack time is communication with your child about what they'll be eating. To keep them interested, get their feedback and get them involved. When given the opportunity, many children will take great pride in helping put their lunch box together every day.

### Reference:

Eat Right Ontario (2015). Frequently asked questions: packing health school lunches and snacks. Retrieved from: <http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/articles/frequently-asked-questions/packing-healthy-school-lunches-and-snacks-faqs.aspx#important>

1 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee. Report of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010, to the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture; 2010.

2 CDC. Recommendations to prevent and control iron deficiency in the United States. MMWR 1998;47:1-29.



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