

# In Good Health

## FUEL FOR SCHOOL:

### HEALTHY LUNCH BOX IDEAS FOR HEALTHY KIDS

**Back to school time!** It's time to dust off those backpacks, notebooks, and lunch boxes. But what should we put in the lunch boxes that will give our kids the best fuel for school?

Unfortunately, you cannot "go with the flow" when it comes to lunch box ideas. Prepackaged lunch meals are often times highly processed and high in fat, sodium, and artificial ingredients. Snack packs of cookies, fruit roll ups, and cakes follow the same pattern; these dessert treats are packed with sugar, artificial colors and flavors, and artery clogging hydrogenated fats.

**So, why does it matter?** Can't kids eat "kid foods"?

The answers are clear. Eating healthy is important from day one of a child's life. The Bogalusa Heart Study is a well-known 30-year continuous study of 14,000 children and young adults. It is the longest and most-detailed study on the health of children's hearts anywhere in the world. It has clearly shown that the path to heart disease begins in childhood. Dr David Katz, head of Preventative medicine at Yale University says, "Children are more harmed by poor diet than by exposure to alcohol, drugs and tobacco combined." Most of us are aware that the U.S. has a noticeable problem with childhood obesity that could lead to health problems for our adult children down the road. Packing a healthy lunch for your child is a tremendous gift that will help them fuel up, think better, and feel good while preventing heart disease.

**What should a healthy lunch look like?** Ideally, a balanced lunch should contain a whole grain source, lean protein, fruit, vegetable, and plant based fat.

Sandwiches are great ideas for healthy lunches. When possible, they should be packed on whole grain bread or whole grain white made from albino whole-wheat flour. A healthy bread choice contains at least 3 grams of fiber and does not contain high fructose corn syrup or hydrogenated fat. What should go on your sandwich? Lean meats such as turkey breast,



roast beef, and ham are great sandwich stuffers as are natural peanut butter and whole fruit jelly. Sandwich alternatives could include all natural crackers made without hydrogenated fat, and hard cheese.

Fruits and vegetables are more difficult to incorporate. Kids tend to be resistant to fruits and vegetables at first, but they do learn to like them if they are offered them regularly. It's a good idea to serve them in a fun fashion, such as berries in yogurt, apples to dip in natural peanut butter, or kiwis cut in half to be scooped out with a spoon. Melons keep nicely in a small container inside a lunch box, and apples and oranges are usually a hit. Veggies can include sliced tomato to be put on sandwiches or eaten alone, baby carrots and celery served with ranch dip, sliced cucumber, and sliced red, green, and yellow peppers.

Plant based fats are important because they have omega fatty acids, which are good for the brain, and they make you feel full, faster. Using olive oil or canola oil based mayonnaise as a sandwich spread is an easy switch and solution. For a snack, guacamole served with chips or a handful of nuts and seeds are quick, ideal alternatives to unhealthy snack packs.

**What to drink?** Although many kids will ask for high sugar "juice boxes" or sodas, what they really need to be drinking is water. Water is essential for optimum brain functioning because dehydration can lead to sluggish feelings that can adversely affect a child's performance in school. 100 % juice is also a good source of hydration and is a good source of Vitamin C.

Dessert for Lunch? Surprising to most kids and parents, dessert is not meant to be an everyday item, but rather an occasional treat to enjoy. So if you want to add a couple of cookies every once in a while, go for it! But be sure that you are not doing that every day.

**Sure, it's easier to pack a lunch that is a lot less healthy, but when it comes to your kids, accept only the BEST FUEL FOR SCHOOL!**

#### Lunch solution #1

Turkey breast and cheese sandwich on whole wheat with olive oil based mayonnaise  
Sliced tomato (in container)  
Fresh peach  
Water or 100% juice

#### Lunch solution #2

Whole grain crackers with cheddar cheese slices  
Apple slices with natural peanut butter  
Baby carrots with ranch dip  
Water or 100% juice

#### Lunch solution #3

Peanut butter and jelly sandwich on whole grain white  
Fresh berries and vanilla yogurt with slivered almonds  
Sliced cucumbers  
Water or 100% juice

#### Lunch solution #4

Ham and cheese sandwich on whole grain bread with olive oil based mayonnaise spread  
Sliced red, yellow, and orange peppers  
Kiwi  
Water or 100% juice

#### Lunch solution #5

Roast beef sandwich on whole grain bread  
Celery sticks with peanut butter  
Grapes  
Water or 100% juice

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