

School lunch-box ideas

When preparing a school lunch box for your child, make sure to include foods from each of the food groups (see *p.71*) and vary these foods throughout the week. Variety will ensure that you are providing the maximum number of nutrients and will also prevent your child from getting bored with eating the same things.

Prepare foods that are appropriate for your child's age; for example, peeled apple or pear slices are ideal for a young child, while whole fruit is fine for an older child. You could try letting your child make his or her own sandwich, choosing healthy fillings together. If your children buy drinks at school, teach them why it is better to choose low-fat milk, bottled water, or even low-fat chocolate milk, all of which are more nutritious than sodas and juice drinks.



Unhealthy lunch

Ham and cheese are high in saturated fat, while white bread is low in fiber. Potato chips, chocolate-chip muffin, and cola add extra fat, sugar, and calories to this very unhealthy lunch.



Healthy lunch

Whole-wheat pita containing sliced chicken, tomato, and lettuce is a nutritious low-fat lunch. A red apple, low-fat yogurt, and fresh orange juice are healthy choices and add vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

Lunch-box tips

Try some of these suggestions for your child's lunch box, and make sure you follow the storage tips.

Lunch menu ideas Provide a carton of long-life low-fat milk or apple juice with each lunch. Add one or more pieces of fruit, and vary the choices daily.

- Raisin bread or an English muffin spread with light cream cheese and topped with either low-sugar jelly, cucumber slices, or tomato. Serve with fruited yogurt.
- Whole-wheat pita filled with tuna, light mayonnaise, lettuce, and sweet pickle relish. Serve with cherry tomatoes and low-fat chocolate milk.
- Taco with kidney beans, topped with low-fat cheddar cheese, lettuce, and very mild salsa. Serve with baby carrots and fresh pear slices.
- Pasta salad with tuna or some shredded chicken breast, corn, cucumber slices, and chopped parsley with a low-fat dressing. Serve with a cereal bar.

Storage tips If keeping food cool at school poses a problem, freeze drinks or low-fat yogurts at home, and by lunchtime they should have become defrosted.

- Keep cold foods cold in an insulated lunch box. Include a frozen juice pack or water bottle.
- Keep hot foods warm by using an insulated portable container.

Source:

Nutrition for Life by Lisa Hark, PhD, RD and Darwin Deen, MD

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