



PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA

Central Michigan District Health Department

"Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"

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To: Local Newspapers

From: Alison Fegan, Health Educator

RE: Fight Childhood Obesity by Packing a Healthy Lunch

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Packing a Healthy Lunch for Your Child

It's getting to be that time of year again, summer vacation is winding down and it's time to start getting prepared for the kids to return to school. As a parent, this means early mornings, getting the children breakfast, along with packing your child a healthy lunch which everyone knows can be a challenge. Packing a healthy lunch means saving money and your child's health. When you pack your kid's lunchbox, YOU control what goes into it.

So what should go into a lunchbox you ask? A survey found that 74% of all school lunchboxes include a sandwich. Peanut butter and jelly is the most popular. Fruit drinks and fruit, such as an apple are found in 59% of lunches.

This is a good start. After all, the American Obesity Association found that 15.5% of all kids and adolescents ages 6 to 19 are obese. One way to help your child fight obesity is by packing a healthy school lunch. Here are a few tips:

- **Go whole.** Instead of white bread, use whole wheat on your sandwiches. Whole wheat has more vitamins and minerals.
- **Skip the soda.** Add 100% fruit juice instead. Unlike soda, which is high in sugar, 100% fruit juice doesn't have any added sugar. You could also add skim or 1% milk or even just a bottle of water.
- **Add the goods.** Make sure you're including healthy foods like vegetables, whole grains, and dairy products. Try things like carrots and low-fat dip, whole grain crackers, and low-fat yogurt.
- **Substitute 'em.** There are many healthy alternatives to your child's favorite food. Instead of potato chips, which are high in fat and sodium, try baked chips or unbuttered

popcorn. Instead of fruit snacks, try fresh or dried fruit. Instead of candy, try granola bars or apple slices.

- **Mix it up.** Changing what's inside the lunchbox will prevent your child from getting bored and will encourage him or her to try new things.
- **Make it fun.** Your child's health is about more than just eating right. Make your child smile by putting a simple, loving note in his or her lunchbox. Or surprise your child with a sweet treat like a low-fat cookie or trail mix.

Childhood obesity is a growing problem. While genetics may play a part, poor eating habits and inactivity are the key causes of this alarming trend. The American Obesity Association has called today's kids "the most inactive generation in history". With less active forms of entertainment and tempting sugary snacks, today's youth do not have the practical habits to ensure a healthy future. As parents, you play a pivotal role in helping your child make healthy food choices. Good luck and happy healthy packing.

This article was provided to you by the staff at the Central Michigan District Health Department which serves Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon Counties.

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