



*Promoting Healthy Families,
Healthy Communities*

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Packing a Healthy Lunch for Your Child

Over the years the school cafeteria has become a place of too many food choices from franchise fast food offerings to the usual foods we grew up with. Most kids do not know how to pick a healthy lunch when they are at school, or are not put in the right situation to do so considering the many tempting choices. Probably the healthiest thing that you can do for your young child is to pack their lunch.

Giving your child a balanced meal is the key to serving a healthy lunch. Every meal should include a good source of carbohydrate and protein. Good sources of protein include chicken, eggs, beef, baked beans, and fish. Carbohydrate food sources such as rice, pasta, whole grain bread and cereal will help your child finish their day healthy and give them enough energy to enjoy after school activities.

When planning your child's school lunch meal, you should start by going over the school's cafeteria menu with your child and ask what he likes. This will give you a good idea of what he'll eat and make packing his lunch a lot easier. You can also make suggestions of what you think would be some good choices to include in his lunch, and see what he thinks.

A lunchmeat and cheese sandwich, chips, soft drink, pudding and fruit snacks sounds like a typical lunch, but it is not the healthiest choice for a child. Of course, if everything mentioned is low-fat, the choice becomes a lot better. An example of a more nutritionally balanced lunch would be a half-sandwich with lean meat like turkey or ham, low-fat cheese, fresh fruit and veggies, low-fat milk, bottled water, orange or apple juice. To satisfy sweet cravings send low-fat puddings, or single serving snack packs of animal crackers or the like.

When packing a lunch for your child, make sure that the container is safe and secure. Invest in ice-pack lids and use them with your child's lunch to keep cold food cold and also to avoid food poisoning or other health-related issues. Also make sure that if you are going to pack anything hot, then you should pack it in an insulated thermos, so hot food stays hot. You can find out more facts about packing a healthy lunch for your child at <http://www.kidshealth.org>.

This article was brought to you by the Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the residents in Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, and Roscommon counties.