

BACK TO SCHOOL LUNCH IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE DAY!

It is hard to believe that summer has passed so quickly. Broward County children will soon be heading back to school. About this time of year, parents are purchasing new lunch boxes, or their kids are trying to find lunch boxes that they used last year. Many will choose food available in the school cafeteria. Family grocery lists will soon change to include those items routinely packed in school lunches.

We all know nutritious and safe meals are a priority. Unfortunately, many lunch bags contain foods with too much fat, sugar and salt and are missing vegetables, fruit and whole grains. Lunch should provide sufficient amounts of calories and nutrients to keep the child well nourished throughout the entire school day. Good nutrition plays an important role in a successful day for a child and can help them feel full longer, so they stay alert and are able to concentrate at school. Properly fed kids don't happen by accident. Packing a nutritious lunch, which children will eat, can be a frustrating challenge.

One of the best ways to get your children to eat what you pack, is to get them involved in the selection of what you send with them. Let kids help prepare sandwiches and fill their own lunch boxes. They will be more likely to consume the entire meal. Some smaller children often like to eat the same things repeatedly. Try to incorporate variety, as much as possible. Teaching children how to eat healthy will enable them to establish a foundation of good nutrition and positive lifestyle habits that will benefit them for the rest of their lives.



Lunch Box Food Safety

Start by preparing and packing safe lunches at home. Use containers specifically designed for carrying food. Wrap sandwiches and other foods tightly in plastic wrap or in sealed plastic bags. Be sure to wash containers and lunch boxes thoroughly with hot soapy water on a regular basis to clean and sanitize. Discard all used food packaging, plastic bags, disposable water bottles, paper bags and perishable leftovers.

Keep lunch at a safe temperature. Keep cold foods cold. You can use an ice pack, a frozen bottle of water or a frozen juice box (which should thaw/defrost by lunchtime) to keep lunches cold.

Use an unbreakable thermos to maintain the proper temperature of hot food items. You can pre-heat a thermos with hot water before placing food in it.



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SolutionsForYourLife.com

<http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/browardco/>

Don't stress out over making lunch for your children. Do plan ahead. Make sure you have an adequate supply of lunch food items on hand--to make it through the week. Pack food the night before to avoid the morning rush and avoid making unwise choices. A variety of ready-to-eat items are available to help put together a quick nutritious lunch. To save money, you can purchase larger food quantities and re-package them in your own individual serving size bags.

Use MyPlate guidelines to help make lunch selections. Be mindful of portion control and portion size. Include fruits and vegetables, low fat milk, yogurt or cheese, grain choices, low fat protein selections.

Here are some suggestions on what to pack:

Grains (Grains provide minerals, fiber and B vitamins)

- ◆ Whole wheat bread
- ◆ Bagel
- ◆ Whole wheat or regular English muffins
- ◆ Pita bread
- ◆ Tortillas
- ◆ Flat bread
- ◆ Whole wheat crackers

Milk and dairy (Milk contains calcium, protein and vitamin D)

- ◆ Low fat milk
- ◆ Single serving low fat shelf milk (brick packs)
- ◆ String cheese
- ◆ Cheese cubes
- ◆ Low fat yogurt
- ◆ Single serving cottage cheese
- ◆ Single serving pudding

Fruit and vegetables (Good source of nutrients and fiber)

- ◆ Grapes
- ◆ Bananas
- ◆ Unsweetened cups of applesauce
- ◆ 100% fruit juice
- ◆ Cantaloupe, watermelon or honey dew melon
- ◆ Small box of raisins
- ◆ Baby carrots
- ◆ Oranges
- ◆ Broccoli
- ◆ Cauliflower
- ◆ Sugar snap peas
- ◆ Celery sticks
- ◆ Small bags of ready to eat apples



Protein foods (Provides nutrients and iron)

- ◆ Lean sliced turkey or ham
- ◆ Hard boiled eggs
- ◆ Nuts and seeds
- ◆ Peanut butter

Snacks

- ◆ Pretzels/ Pretzel Sticks
- ◆ Rice Cakes
- ◆ Graham crackers
- ◆ Animal Crackers



Pack lunches that are both safe and contribute to a healthy diet.

Don't forget to include a napkin or two for clean up!

Lastly you can include some "lunch mail" or a personal note in your child's lunch box, to tell him or her how much you love them and to reinforce just how special they are to you.



For more information:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/myplate-guide-school-lunch>

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/FM/FM46900.pdf>

<http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/broward/family-and-consumer-sciences/SolutionsForYourLife.com>

<http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/browardco/>

www.choosemyplate.gov

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