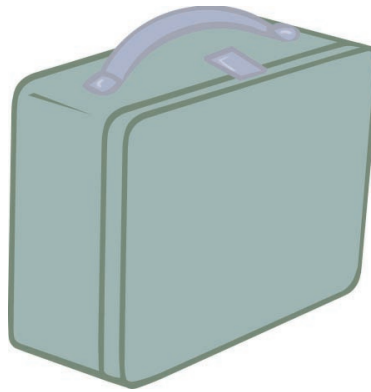


# More Healthful Lunches

It's that time of year again!!! With kids off to school they are again faced with the important question: what's for lunch? With childhood obesity on the rise, having a nutritious lunch is an important part of an overall healthful diet. Since most kids consume one-third of their daily total calories at lunch, here are some tips on helping them eat more super-nutritious foods.

## Pack It Yourself

- Plan ahead!! It helps to have all the right ingredients on hand for making the best lunch. You might even consider coming up with a weekly menu. Involve the kids in planning whenever possible.
- Avoid last-minute rushing by preparing all or part of lunch the night before.
- Use cookie cutters to make fun shapes with sandwiches, etc.
- Make sure you always include at least one fresh fruit or vegetable – both is even better!



- Hide special notes or cards in the lunch box.
- Best beverage bets include skim milk, water or 100% fruit juice.
- Try to use more low-fat snack and cookie items – see our list below for ideas.
- Remember food safety. It is best if you keep foods chilled in insulated lunch boxes with either an ice pack or frozen juice box. FMI visit [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org).
- For advice on packing school lunches, visit KidsHealth online at [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org).

## The School Lunch Line

- Obtain a school lunch menu and help your child make better decisions at home. Emphasize the importance of the basics:
  - Eating enough fruits and vegetables
  - Choosing items that are low in fat
  - Keeping sugary foods as a treat, not a mainstay
  - Having a variety of grains, fruits and vegetables, low-fat protein and low-fat dairy items each day.
- Practice making better choices everywhere you go so your child is better equipped at the lunch line.
- Don't like the menu offered at your child's school? You can do something about it!!! Visit the USDA's Web site with 10 steps for parents at [www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov). You will also find useful tips at this site.

*By Theresa Hennig, MEd, RD*

## Lunchtime Makeovers

### Instead of:

High-fat cheese and lunch meats  
White bread  
Mayonnaise  
Fried chips  
Fruit in syrup  
Cookies and snack cakes  
Fruit drinks and soda

### Consider:

Roasted chicken and turkey with lots of lettuce and tomato  
100% whole-wheat bread or pita pockets  
Light mayonnaise or low-fat dressing  
Baked chips, air-popped popcorn, veggies and dip  
Fresh fruit or fruit packed in juice  
Yogurt or low-fat baked goods  
Skim milk, soy milk, water or 100% fruit juice