

Healthy People

Lunchbox Lessons

Hard to believe, but it's back-to-school time for many kids around the country. And if you're like the majority of other parents who make their children's lunches, you're back to the daily challenge of figuring out what to pack. In one survey, 70 percent of parents polled said they struggle with providing new or a variety of options, 59 percent said they wish they knew of healthier options, and 45 percent said they find it challenging to pack items that keep well.

So what are well-meaning parents to do? The answer is not, unfortunately, give the kids money for lunch—84 percent of kids in the same survey said they prefer home-packed lunches to the school cafeteria ones. Below are a few tips to packing a healthier lunch (that your child will actually eat) this school year:

* Enlist your child's help. Kids are always more likely to eat food that they feel some connection to. Depending on your child's age and ability level, you can take him or her grocery shopping with you, ask for help preparing a dish, or have him or her do something as simple as having place the items in a lunchbox.

* Play up the package. Get a fun lunchbox with your elementary schooler's favorite superheroes, or a funky bag with your middle school-aged fashionista's favorite zebra print to help make their from-home lunch feel special and enticing.

* Go hot or cold. Room-temperature stable lunches are fine, but peanut butter and jelly gets old after a while (if your child's school even allows PBJ, that is). Invest in an insulated lunch bag with an ice pack so you can safely send foods like yogurt, egg salad, and deli meat, or a thermos or something similar to keep foods like soup, pasta, and chili hot.

* Think tapas. Sandwiches can make for great lunches. But you're somewhat limited between two slices of bread. Instead, build a lunch that consists of a few small plates (tapas usually means a variety of appetizer- or snack-sized dishes in Spanish foods). A baggie filled with sliced cucumber and red pepper, a handful of crackers, a string cheese, a bag of chickpeas, and an apple; voila—you have a meal.



National Cholesterol Education Month

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance that your body needs to stay healthy. If you have too much of it, though, it can build up inside your arteries and cause heart disease, heart attack, or stroke.

September is National Cholesterol Education Month, so here are some important things to know: Get your cholesterol levels checked so you know if you need to make any lifestyle changes. Ask your doctor how often you should be checked.

A healthy lifestyle can help keep your cholesterol under control. That means:

- Eating a healthy diet that is high in fiber and "good" fats, like avocados and nuts. Avoid saturated and trans fats.
- Stay physically active. You don't have to run a marathon, just be sure to get up and move on a regular basis.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight can raise your cholesterol.
- Eliminate tobacco. If you smoke or use smokeless tobacco, quit as soon as possible. There are free services to help you, if needed.
- If you are taking medicine to lower your cholesterol, follow your doctor's instructions.

For more information about cholesterol and what you need to know, go to the Centers for Disease Control website at: www.cdc.gov/features/cholesterolawareness