

How to Pack Brown Bag Lunches for the Whole Family



Summer is coming to an end, so it is time to start thinking about packing school lunches again. As a parent, it is important to that your child's lunch is a balanced, healthy meal to make sure that they are receiving all the necessary nutrients for proper growth. Packing healthy lunches are not just a great idea for your kids, but also for

the whole family. Packing lunches can help your family live a healthier lifestyle, and it will also save you money! While the task of packing day after day can be daunting, packing a healthy school lunch doesn't have to be complicated or time-consuming. By following these simple tips you can make lunch a healthy and tasty break during the school day and work day for your whole family.

Tip 1: Plan Ahead

You can pack a healthy lunch in minimal time by doing a little preparation the weekend. Buy enough groceries for the whole week, and when you have some spare time during the weekend, wash, peel, and chop fresh fruit and veggies and place them in containers for an easy snack that you can grab from the fridge and drop in your brown paper bag. Keep all of the sandwich materials close together so that you can grab the ingredients and make a sandwich filled with meat and vegetables without searching all over the fridge. You can even make the sandwich the night before as long as you leave out any dressings. Also, try to pack the lunch early in the morning to prevent rushing and forgetting parts of the lunch or choosing to forgo packing a lunch and buying one instead. If you don't want to eat a sandwich every day, cook extra food for dinner one night and pack leftovers for lunch the next day.



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Katie Serbinski, the official RD for Produce for Kids, is mom of three children under the age of four and a Registered Dietitian from Detroit, Michigan. She's the founder of Mom to Mom Nutrition, a healthy food and lifestyle blog where she share her "me time" with other health-minded parents. On her blog you'll find simple, family-friendly recipes, tips for new moms, and realistic nutrition advice. Through Mom to Mom Nutrition, Katie shows her readers that raising a healthy family is achievable, even when you have a toddler throwing food across your kitchen table and a baby wanting to nurse around the clock.

Tip 2: Pack a Balanced Lunch

Eating a balanced, healthy lunch is important for both you and your kids. Choose foods from each food group. There are plenty of healthy choices within each food group that provides kids with the nutrients they need. Try to have at least one fruit, one vegetable, some protein and a healthy carb. Use whole wheat bread for sandwiches to get in a serving of whole grains that are packed with many important nutrients. Avoid overloading on one area or another by planning your dishes ahead of time.

Tip 3: Pick the Right Drink

Avoid packing sugary drinks such as soda. Opt for a 100% fruit juice with no sugar added, lowfat milk, or pack water. Buy small juice boxes and cartons of milk that are easy and quick to place in a bag. If you forget to pack a drink, your child can purchase milk from school or make sure they know to avoid the sugary drinks in the vending machine. For you, keep a water bottle on yourself throughout the day. Staying hydration is important.

Tip 4: Get the Kids Involved

While at the grocery store you can talk to your kids about the importance of making half your plate fruits and vegetables while helping kids pick out their favorite fruits and vegetables in the produce section, or talk about the bone-building benefits of milk, cheese and yogurt found in the dairy case. Encourage kids to get involved in the packing process with foods that they like too! Kids are often more likely to eat their lunch if they have picked the foods out themselves. Plus, if they see you packing a nutritious lunch, they will be more likely to do the same. Allow them to pack their own lunch a couple days of the week once they're a little older. This will teach them how to pack a balanced lunch and eventually they can pack their own and it will be one less lunch you will have to make!



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