

Tips to Packing a School Lunch:

- Buy an insulated lunch bag to keep their lunch cool. Try Amazon or Target for different options
- Include an ice or cold pack to keep foods cold
- Consider packing your child's lunch the night before. You can prepare it while dinner is cooking or right after dinner is finished
- Let your child participate in what to pack for lunch by giving them several healthy options for them to choose from (fruit, veggies, type of sandwich)
- For younger kids, make their lunch fun by using cookie cutters to shape their fruit and/or sandwiches
- Older children and teenagers can help with the preparation and packing. Have them prepare their own lunch while dinner is cooking
- Pack foods that are easy to grab like string cheese, fruit, whole grain crackers, or veggies and dip
- If there is a microwave at school, you can pack leftovers from the night before. Otherwise, think of other lunch options that don't require microwaving

Examples of Balanced Lunches

- Turkey sandwich on whole wheat bread with lettuce, tomato and mustard; baby carrots with low fat Ranch dressing; grapes; and string cheese
- Pasta salad with broccoli, carrots, tomato, cucumber, grilled chicken, and feta cheese tossed in Italian dressing; an orange; and protein bar (KIND, Rx Bar, Lara Bar, Luna Bar)
- Scoop of tuna salad on a whole wheat tortilla with lettuce and a slice of cheese; red bell pepper strips on the side; an apple; and air popped popcorn
- Whole wheat crackers with cheese; cucumber slices; banana; and Greek yogurt
- Summer salad with mixed greens, sliced strawberries, cucumber, with Raspberry vinaigrette on the side; string cheese; whole wheat pretzels

Quick Tips:

- Make sure to include a source of **protein!** This will help keep them satisfied longer
- Grill extra chicken, keep in the refrigerator, reheat, and add to meals for quick lunches/dinners
- Boil eggs ahead of time and keep a stash in the fridge for lunches and/or snacks
- Always store cheese and yogurt in the fridge as protein options
- Keep protein bars in the pantry for healthy snacks on the go pre or post after school activities

If you are unable to pack them a lunch, be an advocate for healthy meals!:

- Find out if your school has nutrition policies including standards for the school meals
- Be active in your school. If you can, offer to help your school to improve their meal program. You can go to this page for more information on how to improve school meals: <https://cspinet.org/what-you-can-do/take-actions>
- Check your school's website for their weekly menu. You can always pack a lunch instead if needed