

## Water

Water is not only the best beverage choice, but an essential one. It returns fluids lost through everyday tasks of breathing, sweating, and even digesting meals. It keeps the body's temperature regulated on hot days and carries nutrients and oxygen to all cells. It also does not have calories, sugar, caffeine, and other additives found in sugary drinks.

## Healthy LunchBox Ideas

### Tacos

Shred up whatever meat you desire and pack it along with corn tortillas, rice, lettuce, pico de gallo, and pepitas for a complete meal.

### Tuna Salad

Tuna salad made with Greek yogurt instead of mayo is healthy, lean protein, but adding an egg and unsalted almonds will help ensure you meet your protein minimum. Two servings of fruits and vegetables complete this lunch.

### BLT

This lunch has protein (bacon) and whole grains (bread) but adding almonds and a serving each of fruit (strawberries and half an apple) and veggies (lettuce and pickles) can boost the nutritional value.

## Reusables

Many places are recycling clean paper, plastic, and metal and composting food scraps, paper towels, and napkins. You can help reduce waste when packing your lunch.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Pack a cloth napkin instead of a paper napkin.
- Pack reusable utensils instead of using disposable plastics.
- Pack a reusable drink container instead of cans or plastic bottles.
- Pack lunch items in reusable containers. Stay away from plastic wraps, plastic bags, and aluminum foil.
- Pack lunches in a lunchbox or backpack instead of paper or plastic bags.

## References:

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Hsph.harvard.edu. (n.d.). *Packing a Healthy Lunchbox*. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Retrieved January 12, 2023, from [https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/kids-healthy-lunchbox-guide/#:~:text=Avoid%20sugary%20drinks.,white%20rice%20and%20white%20bread\).](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/kids-healthy-lunchbox-guide/#:~:text=Avoid%20sugary%20drinks.,white%20rice%20and%20white%20bread).)

This brochure is intended to promote healthy habits. It is not intended as a substitute for medical advice or professional care. Before making changes to your diet or exercise, consult your health care provider.



# Packing a Healthy Lunch



➤ Tips and Tricks  
to Keep Your **Lunch Healthy!**





## Packing a Healthy Lunch

### Packing lunch does not have to be a chore.

You and your family can follow these simple steps to pack a quick, healthy lunch!

We know it is tempting to have coffee for breakfast and fast food for lunch. But these quick fixes can lead to obesity as well as reduced energy and focus.

## Saving Time

### Arrange by portion sizes.

Sort fruits and veggies for the week by putting daily portions into plastic bags or freeze single servings of soup for quick reheating in the morning.

### Lunch bin for the win.

Eliminate your searches for granola bars all over the pantry as you pack lunch. Keep your snacks, juices, and fruit cups together in a bin for a convenient grab-and-go lunch.

### Bento box style.

Use one compartment for fruit, one for veggies, and one for protein, grains, and dairy.

### Pack ahead.

Make lunches the night before or even several days in advance.

## Tips for Staying Healthy

### → Choose whole grains.

This is not limited to only bread. Try new options by packing brown rice or whole-grain pita pockets instead.

### → Protein other than meat.

Beans, hummus, and nuts are all great sources of protein.

### → Say no to cold cuts.

These can be sources of sodium. Pick grilled chicken, egg whites, or lean pork instead.

### → Pick low-fat dairy products.

When reading food labels, for every 100 calories, if the product has 3 grams of fat or less, it is a low-fat product.

### → Mix it up with different fruit.

Fruit leathers and fruit sauces are both great alternatives to fresh fruit. Make sure the amount of added sugar is low.

### → Pack a veggie dip.

Make vegetables more fun and tastier by including some veggie dip. For a protein-packed dip, try hummus and veggie sticks.

### → Avoid added sugars, trans-fats, and saturated fats in snacks.

Instead of cookies and chips, fill up on popcorn without the butter, fruit chips, or string cheese.

### → Make lunch fun.

Instead of packing a regular sandwich, make a kabob by placing the sandwich components on a stick.



## A Healthy Lunchbox



**Fill half the lunchbox with colorful fruits or vegetables, one-quarter with whole grains, and the remaining quarter with healthy proteins.**

Healthy fats and a small amount of dairy will complete a delicious lunch that will keep kids active and healthy.

### When packing your child's lunch:

**Select 1 fresh fruit.** For example: grapes, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, apple or pear slices, banana, peeled, seedless clementines, or dried apricots.

**Select 2 vegetables.** For example: baby carrots, cucumbers, cherry tomatoes, snap peas, celery sticks, bell pepper strips, cooked veggies in a thermos can be eaten hot or cold, or salad.

**Select 1 healthy protein.** For example: sliced chicken breast, cheese cubes or string cheese, mixed seeds and nuts (like pumpkin, sunflower, almond, or walnut), hummus, plain yogurt, or hard-boiled eggs.

**Select 1 whole grain.** For example: low-fat granola, whole-wheat crackers, pita bread, mini bagels, homemade muffins, wheat or rye bread, small tortillas, or a granola bar.

**Incorporate dairy (if desired).** For example: unflavored milk, plain Greek yogurt, or string cheese.

- For dairy-free options, try soy, almond, or oat milk or yogurt.

**Water is always a great beverage option.** For example: flavored and unsweetened seltzer or fruit-infused waters.

