



From the Food Bank Kitchen

Healthy Packed Lunch Ideas

*When heading to work or sending kids off to school, plan at least a couple of times per week to pack a lunch and snacks to bring from home for a more nutritious meal. Many school meals and takeout/fast food choices exceed calories, sugar, and sodium recommendations. You may find it helpful to look over menus ahead of time to see what healthier options are available. For instance, you could choose grilled chicken instead of fried, hamburger over a hot dog or nuggets, and order a side salad with light dressing. **A healthy, balanced lunch gives kids, as well as adults, energy to avoid an afternoon slump, focus better on work, maintain weight by avoiding excess calories, and feel less hungry once you get home after a long day.***

Reasons to pack your lunch: **CONTROL** — You know what you are eating, and can avoid lunch lines and the temptation to choose higher sodium and fat foods like pizza, fried chicken, and coldcuts. **VARIETY** — You can pack fresh fruits, dips for crackers or raw veggies, hot soup/leftovers or mac and cheese (use an insulated thermos). **SAVE MONEY** — When lunch is packed, you won't feel compelled to hit the corner store for high sugar, high fat, salty snacks. **MORE ENERGY** will result from snacks with a combination of protein and carbohydrate. Homemade trail mix, baby carrots and yogurt dip, or whole grain crackers with cheese will provide lasting energy to keep one going through a late afternoon game or activity.

Healthier packed lunch alternatives: It is recommended to have meals that include lean meats, fruits, veggies, and whole grains, such as whole wheat bread instead of white. Try to avoid hot dogs, fried foods and large subs with high fat meats like salami, bologna, or sausage. For drinks, beverages such as water, unflavored low-fat milk, 100% juice or unsweetened iced tea are healthier options. Choose chips or fries no more than once a week, and limit serving size to 1 oz (about 15 chips). Choose turkey or ham instead of bologna or salami, and mustard instead of mayo. Throw in some lettuce and tomato. It is recommended that lunches contain at least 20 grams of protein to satisfy hunger for a few hours.

Safe packing: Wash hands before preparing lunch and before eating lunch. A mini bottle of hand sanitizer is great to include, with moist towelettes for clean up after. Use an insulated lunch bag and reusable **ice pack** for perishables like cheese, yogurt, deli-meat, hard boiled eggs, hummus, and tuna. Individually wrapped cheeses are easy, as are PB & J and portion-packed fruit. Discard any foods that have not been stored properly for 4 hours or longer.

Healthy Packed Lunch Ideas

- Whole wheat mini bagel with cheese or PB; red or yellow pepper slices, small pear or apple or orange sections
- Hard-boiled egg mashed with quartered cherry tomatoes and light mayo on whole wheat; blueberries /strawberries
- Greek yogurt (fat-free) with mix-ins of apricots or raisins and a handful of nuts or peanuts; cucumber sticks on the side
- Chicken cubes mixed with pasta or rice and a veggie (try frozen peas or mixed veggies) or pepper slices; grapes
- Refried beans on whole wheat tortilla with grated cheese, lettuce, tomato; roll up and pack with a side of salsa and fruit
- Leftover baked chicken, shredded and tossed with BBQ sauce with a bun or pita and a spoon to assemble at lunch
- Peanut Butter & Banana S'mores — Graham crackers stacked with peanut butter and banana slices (or try soy nut butter for kids with peanut allergies or whose schools prohibit bringing in peanut products)
- Cooked leftover pasta packed into container with your favorite "mix ins" like cheese cubes, ham or turkey, tuna, beans, grape tomatoes or a handful of a frozen vegetable blend (it will thaw by lunchtime), then tossed with Italian vinaigrette
- Whole-grain crackers or mini rice cakes with hummus, yogurt, or peanut butter for dipping; baby carrots, and an apple
- Deli turkey or ham in a whole-grain wrap with mustard, cheese, avocado, lettuce, and tomato; a peach or berries

Source: www.kidshealth.org, www.parenting.com

(over for more recipes)

Peanut Butter and Jelly 'Sushi' Rolls

Makes 8 rolls (1 serving)

Source: www.food.com

- 2 Tbsp creamy peanut butter
- 1 Tbsp jam, jelly or preserves (pick your favorite)
- 2 slices whole wheat bread, light (40-50 calories per slice)

Remove crusts from bread. With a rolling pin or large soup can, completely flatten bread. Spread 1 tablespoon of peanut butter and ½ tablespoon fruit spread onto each slice of bread. Roll each slice into a tight spiral. Cut each one into 4 pieces.

Nutrition Facts: Calories 320, Fat 17 gm, Saturated Fat 3 gm, Sodium 250 mg, Carbs 39 gm, Fiber 6 gm, Protein 12 gm

Perfect Baked Pita Chips

8 servings

Source: www.allrecipes.com

- 4 pita pockets, 6 ½ inch, preferably whole wheat
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 Tbsp garlic powder
- ½ tsp salt (coarse kosher salt if available)
- 1 tsp dried basil or Italian Seasoning or onion powder
- Paprika and/or parmesan cheese, optional

Tips: Use scissors or pizza cutter to cut each circle into 6 triangular wedges before baking. To save time, put pita pieces into a Ziploc bag with the oil and spices and shake around before spreading onto baking sheet.

Directions: Preheat oven to 350°F. Separate the top from the bottom of each pita and spread onto a baking sheet, with the inside part of bread facing up. Brush with olive oil and sprinkle with spices. Cut into even wedges. Bake until they turn light brown, about 10 to 15 minutes. Watch closely, as they can burn quickly. These homemade chips go well with cheese slices or mini roll-ups of deli meat, with a separately packed salsa or guacamole as a topping.

Nutrition Facts: Calories 120, Fat 4 gm, Saturated Fat .5 gm, Sodium 290 mg, Carbs 18 gm, Fiber 3 gm, Protein 3 gm

Make a Stick-wich

Source: www.spoonful.com

A sandwich on a stick!

Cut up cubes of bread, cheese, and ham or turkey (order it cut into 1/2-inch thick at deli counter). Slide the cubes onto a wooden skewer with other foods you enjoy, like grape tomatoes, green pepper squares, a piece of lettuce, a pickle wedge, and/or an olive. Be creative! Experiment with leftover fried tofu or tempeh cubes instead of meat, or cut up leftover pizza squares. Include a side of light mayonnaise or dressing for dipping. See how many different colors you can include!

Healthy Trail Mix Snack

Makes about 16 one-third cup servings

Source: www.sparkpeople.com

Store-bought trail mix is often expensive and loaded with high fructose corn syrup and other additives. This snack mix is quick and easy to make and can satisfy the appetite for a few hours. Just mix all ingredients together, then store in an airtight container. Fill sandwich bags or reusable containers in advance with 1/3 cup portions for a quick grab-and-go snack.

- 1 cup any combination of diced dried fruit such as prunes, apricots, dates, figs, pears, apples or blueberries
- ½ cup raisins and/or dried cranberries
- 1½ cups lightly salted toasted sunflower seeds and/or pumpkin seeds
- 1½ cups lightly salted dry-roasted peanuts, honey-roasted peanuts, chopped walnuts or almonds (or any combo)
- 1 cup favorite breakfast cereal (ideally one with 3 grams of fiber per serving or higher like Wheat Chex). Avoid granola, which is high in sugar & calories. (*Tip: choose a gluten-free variety if you need to avoid gluten-containing foods*).

Nutrition Facts: Calories 210, Fat 14 gm, Saturated Fat 2 gm, Sodium 190 mg, Carbs 19 gm, Fiber 4 gm, Sugars 7 gm, Protein 6 gm (If unsalted nuts and seeds are used in this recipe, the sodium content decreases to 25 mg).