Healthy Lunches: School Fuel for Kids

Eating a healthy lunch every day is important for good oral and overall health, and it can help a child concentrate better in school and stay alert in class.

More than 40 percent of elementary school children in the U.S. take their own food to school. Researchers studying lunchbox contents in a number of elementary schools found that none of the lunches prepared at home contained servings from all five food groups (fruits, vegetables, grains, protein and dairy), and only 27 percent had at least three food groups.[1]

Preparing healthy lunches with kid appeal can be tricky and take a little time, but it's worth the effort. The right foods give kids enough energy for school and other activities while helping to keep their teeth cavity-free. There are lots of convenient and healthy choices that taste great and promote good oral and overall health.

Parents and caregivers are role models and have a big impact on a child's health. Eating right is important for a healthy body and mouth, and it's never too early to help your children start good eating habits. The lessons they learn now will last a lifetime.



Did you know?

Children consume up to half of their daily calories in school.[2]

Quick bites

Consider packing these healthy items to provide the school fuel your child needs each day:

- **Dairy products**—Low-fat milk, yogurt and cheese are excellent picks that have lots of calcium. Read the labels as some products aimed at kids are high in fat and sugar.
- **Protein**—Lean roast beef, turkey, chicken and cheese are good sandwich options. Use whole grain bread, and try adding some lettuce and tomato.
- **Fresh fruits and vegetables**—Grapes, apple chunks, orange sections, celery and baby carrots are great additions to a lunchbox.
- **Beverages**—Fluoridated water is a great choice for lunch, as is low-fat milk. Avoid soda pop and juice drinks, as they contain lots of sugar and can be high in calories.

DELTA DENTAL®

Visit us online for more information on oral and overall health!

1. Hubbard, KL et al., "What's in Children's Backpacks: Foods Brought from Home," *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* 114, no. 9 (2014): 1424–431. **2.** Pew Health Group and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, "Out of Balance: A Look at Snack Foods in Secondary Schools Across the States," web.

Healthy Smile, Happy Life

Delta Dental of Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, and Tennessee

RC-6211 v1 PA 8/16