

## Starting A Tradition Of Preparing Healthy School Meals

Most school canteens have now started serving healthier (and tastier) lunch meals and snacks. As such, most parents are now not too concerned about preparing and giving kids packed meals.

However, if getting your kids to continue [exploring new foods](#) and eating well-balanced, nutritious fare are still your priority, you will have to carefully think about and plan what to put in their lunchboxes or brown bags.

### The Benefits of Giving Kids Packed Meals

Giving children packed meals and snacks still offers several benefits which include:

#### 1. You make sure your kids are eating something really healthy.

Although they are serving healthier fare, school cafeterias are still not above putting out fried, greasy foods or dishes with artificial flavors and unhealthy seasonings. They usually do this so that kids will have a variety of items to choose from and to ensure that they will buy something.

When you **personally prepare and pack your children's lunch and snack**, you will be certain that they will be eating nutritious, well-balanced meals. You can make sure only the best, freshest, and healthiest ingredients go into the foods they eat. This will give you the assurance you need that they will get the essential nutrients they need to go through their activities all day.

#### 2. You help lower the risk of childhood obesity.

Since school cafeterias still serve high-fat dishes such as pizza, burgers, and fries, and kids are just naturally drawn to these types of foods, school-aged children are at risk of being overweight. Childhood obesity, in turn, can give rise to other diseases such as diabetes and hypertension which may develop early or later in life.

You can reduce the risk of childhood obesity by giving your kids healthier packed meals for lunch or recess. When you give kids fresh fruits and veggies, as well as meals and snacks cooked using healthy methods or techniques, you **help prevent unwanted weight gain and other health issues**.

#### 3. You give kids the energy they need.

Kids who don't eat a healthy lunch often have a hard time concentrating at school in the afternoon. They will also have difficulties finding the energy they need to go through or complete their other school activities.

You can help your kids avoid these problems by giving them a healthy lunch meal for school every day. A meal packed with nutritious **protein, vegetables, and fruits will give them the fuel they need to stay alert** and continue with their school work after their lunch break. Kids will also feel full longer if they have a well-balanced and healthy meal for lunch.

## School Meal Prep Tips

To make sure your kids continue to enjoy bringing healthy packed lunches and snacks to school, or to get them started on this habit, here are some useful tips you can follow:

- Make school meal plans with the little ones.

**Creating a weekly packed meal and snack plan with your kids** is a great way to get them excited about what they will be bringing and eating in school. In addition, you get to talk to them about the [healthy meal ideas for children](#) you want to try for their packed lunch. You'll be able to ask them what fruits, vegetables, and proteins they want to eat. You will also have peace of mind since you know that your kids will eat something filling and healthy for lunch even if they're not at home.

If they request for something that isn't healthy (think fried chicken, pizza or meatballs), explain to them that you will **follow a recipe that will make these dishes more nutritious**. When you talk to them beforehand, your kids won't be surprised and turned off by the deviation and you will still get them to eat something nutritious.

- Always include fruits and vegetables.

Vegetables and fruits are the two leading sources of various nutrients. It is important to include them in all meals to make sure that your **kids get the required amounts of all essential vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients they need**.

Include vegetables and fruits in the dishes you will prepare for lunch. If your little ones love vegetable salads, include these as a side dish. Add an apple, banana, or a small container of fresh berries or cherries for dessert or as a snack your kids can munch on. Just make sure you use the right containers for your kids' meals to help cooked dishes and raw fruits and veggies retain their flavor and freshness.

- Give kids healthy beverages.

**Water and milk are still the best drinks for children**. These beverages make sure your kids are properly hydrated and that they get some additional nutrients, too.

Staple school canteen beverages such as boxed juice drinks and sodas contain a lot of sugar and artificial flavors. They do not offer anything healthy to kids and can even increase the risk of diabetes, obesity, and dental cavities. Make sure your kids bring a bottle of water or a small box of ready-to-drink milk so that they will drink something healthy whenever they are thirsty.

You can get kids to stick to the habit of bringing packed meals to school by mixing things up regularly. Avoid preparing or cooking the same dishes over and over again so that they won't get bored with the meals they bring to school. With proper planning, you can make sure your kids will always eat something healthy, filling, and tasty for lunch even if they're in school.