



Secrets to Making Healthy and Fun School Lunches

- Create a healthy lunch that your kids will look forward to eating.
- Help your kids overcome the temptations of today's pre-packaged lunches and cafeteria "treats."

Here are some tips from **We Can!** (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition)[®] to get you started:

Pick a theme. Trigger your children's creative juices by suggesting themes, such as:

- **The Dip:** Cut a baked chicken breast into strips, and pack them with honey mustard for dipping. Include carrots and broccoli to dip in fat-free or reduced-fat ranch dressing.
- **Backwards:** Make an inside-out sandwich using lettuce to wrap turkey, fat-free or low-fat cheese, and tomato.
- **Mexican Food Mondays:** Allow your child to build healthy burritos or tacos with ingredients such as: whole-wheat tortillas, lettuce, fat-free or low-fat sour-cream, salsa, brown rice, and beans (not refried).

Keep it interesting. Pack a small quantity of several foods in a bento-type lunch box to keep things interesting. Bento boxes are lunch boxes that include multiple small containers or inserts for different types of food. They're a great way to offer healthy foods in a fun and attractive way. Cut sandwiches into interesting shapes, add colorful fruits and vegetables in different sizes, and pack yummy dips such as fat-free or low-fat yogurt or hummus.



Forget the white bread. Banish boredom by using whole-grain bread options, and switch out the fillers, too. For example:

- If your child loves PB&J, make a peanut butter and banana roll-up. Spread peanut butter on a whole-grain tortilla, add a sliced banana, and roll!
- Fill a pita with your child's favorite vegetables, adding hummus for flavor.
- Spread some pizza sauce on a whole-wheat tortilla, add some low-fat or fat-free mozzarella cheese, then melt, roll, and slice.

Mix up the sides. Go beyond pretzels!

- Dip apple slices in nut/seed butter.
- Pack snap peas, sliced bell peppers, or cucumbers for color and crunch!
- Add some variety with air-popped, low-fat popcorn.

Don't forget that juice and sodas can be high in sugar and calories. Replace them with water or fat-free or low-fat milk.

For more healthy lunch ideas and tips for creating a healthy shopping list, visit **We Can!** at <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov>. Developed by the National Institutes of Health, **We Can!** provides parents, caregivers, and communities with free tips, tools, and guidance to help children ages 8–13 maintain a healthy weight by improving food choices, increasing physical activity, and reducing screen time.