

# 15 Tips for Packed Lunch Success



- 1. Make it safe!** Keep cold foods cold and keep hot foods hot until you are ready to eat them. Thermos containers and insulated lunch bags can help with this. If possible, store cold items in a refrigerator until you are ready to eat them.
- 2. Freeze it.** Freeze a half-filled water bottle overnight. Fill up the water bottle with cold water in the morning, wrap the bottle in a paper towel, and put the bottle inside your insulated lunch bag/box before heading out the door. By the time you are ready for lunch, you will have cold water to drink from your thawed water bottle and your lunch will still be cold.
- 3. Don't forget to wash!** Be sure to wash fresh fruits and vegetables BEFORE you put them in the lunchbox. Also, wash out your family members' lunchboxes every night with hot, soapy water, and let them air dry before repacking.
- 4. Start an assembly line.** Include the whole family in this lunch-on-the-go trend. Line up bread slices, spread each slice with condiments, add toppings (heavy on the veggies), and finish with a top slice of bread. Don't forget to wipe down all surfaces and wash your hands before you begin preparation.
- 5. Portion control.** Each portion should be age-appropriate for all of your family members. For instance, don't give your child a whole sandwich if half of a sandwich is more appropriate.
- 6. Make it kid-friendly.** Let your child pick out his/her own lunchbox and water bottle. Keep lunches exciting for your child by cutting his/her sandwich into shapes. (Cookie cutters are great for this!) Bite-sized finger foods, like carrot sticks, bell pepper slices, and cherry tomatoes, are easier and more fun to eat.
- 7. Include appropriate utensils.** If you need a fork, pack a fork. (Check with your child's school to see what utensils are not appropriate.)
- 8. Beware of the smush!** Pack lunchbox-friendly foods. Also, use hard plastic containers so that your food does not get squashed in transit.
- 9. Climb the Pyramid.** Include plenty of whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, a protein source, and a low-fat dairy source in your lunches. Sweet and salty treats are ok as long as servings are small and they are only included occasionally.





**10. Mix it up.** Keep your lunches exciting by including different foods every day. Include a variety of fruits and vegetables to ensure that you are getting a good supply of vitamins and minerals. Experiment; be adventuresome!

**11. Add a little love.** Include an occasional "thinking of you" note or a sticker in your family members' lunchboxes.

**12. Lunch-pool.** Encourage co-workers to bring their lunch, too, and start a brown bag club. Join with four other people in your office (who have similar taste preferences), and each person chooses one day per week to make lunch for everyone. It is easier to make lots of the same thing than it is to make 5 different meals, and this way you will get four days "off". Find a nice place outside or in an empty office room to sit and enjoy lunch together. If you have a few extra minutes after lunch, then take a walk together around the building.

**13. Plan ahead.** Take some time to think about the foods you and your family might want to pack throughout the upcoming week, and add those foods to your grocery list. Let your family members have an opinion about what foods you buy for their lunches. Prepare as much of the lunch or snack as you can the night before so that all you have to do is grab it and go as you head out the door the next morning.

**14. Buy in bulk.** Buy a week's supply of a certain food on the weekend, and portion it out into baggies before storing so that all you have to do is grab a baggy when you are assembling your lunches throughout the week.

**15. Avoid the vending machine.** Not only does the vending machine usually contain only junk food, it is overpriced junk food. Plan ahead for that 4:00 snack attack by packing a snack.



These and other ideas and recipes can be found at:

**Fabulous Food: Brown Bag Lunches.** Accessed on 21 September 2006.

<<http://www.fabulousfoods.com/holidays/bk2school/bk2school.html>>

Heyhoe, Kate. **25 Tips for Better Brown Bags.** Accessed on 20 September 2006.

<<http://www.globalgourmet.com/food/egg/egg0997/25tips.html>>

Silva, Mary. **Safe Lunch Tips.** Accessed on 21 September 2006.

<<http://www.drspock.com/article/0,1510,4515,00.html>>

Trowbridge, Peggy. **Home Cooking: School Lunch Recipe Tips.** Accessed on 21 September 2006.

<<http://homecooking.about.com/od/specificdishes/a/lunchrecipetips.htm>>