

the fresh 20

lunch

eat



# LUNCH BASICS

## COMMON LUNCH ITEMS

### Lunch Meat

Look for organic, minimally processed meats instead of processed deli meat. Ask the deli counter for an ingredient list to limit preservatives

### Granola Bars

Not all packaged bars are unhealthy. Many offer organic, low sugar bars that can easily be added to lunch. Pay attention to the sugar and sodium content of packaged foods. As with any lunch product, if the ingredients are confusing, chances are it's not the healthiest option. The best solution is to make your own bars.

You would believe how easy they are to bak

### Chips

I don't want to get on a soap box, but chips just don't equate to health. Even the baked versions are loaded with preservatives. If you include chips in your lunch plans, look for natural chips that have no more than 3 ingredients: potato, oil and salt.

### Peanut or Nut Butter

There should only be one ingredient: nuts.

### Yogurt

Avoid gelatin based yogurts with heavy sweeteners. Many yofurt manufacturers have a healthier version that the ones marketed to kids with characters on the packaging. For optimal health buy plain, Greek yogurt and add honey and/or fruit

### Cracker Sandwiches

If you notice the color of the cheese in some of the cracker sandwiches on the market, you can visually indentify that it is not loaded with nutrition. It is always better to make your own. Whole grain crackers and slices of low-fat, natural cheese are a delicious alternative.

### Juice Boxes

I love the simplicity of grabbing a juice box and throwing it into the lunch bag. However, it is not the best option. Juice is very highly concentrated in sugar. As a mom, it sometimes comes down to the lesser of two evils and juice is better than soda. Water is, by far, the best option. Either way, the most sustainable way to include drinks for lunch is to purchase a reusable drink container and fill it yourself.

### Cookies

Brands have made it very easy to purchase little cookie pouches as a filler to daily lunch. Cookies are not part of the lunch bunch. Cookies are a treat, not a food group. Limit use as a lunch staple. Better yet, bake a batch at home and freeze them for an occasional lunch inclusion.

Fruit Roll Ups are not fruit. Read the label. Is the first ingredient fruit?

### TIPS

Use whole grains

Sweeten with honey or 100% maple syrup

Buy organic, minimally processed lunch meat instead of processed, packaged deli meat  
Look for bread that is high in fiber and made with whole grains. If bread has more than 7 ingredients, skip it.





# HEALTHY LUNCH HABITS

## CLEAR OUT THE JUNK

The best offense for health is to eliminate the junk from the kitchen. I don't know about you but if there is a cookie or bag of chips in the house, I can't deny an after school craving for salt and fat. Two of the biggest culprits of an unhealthy family food culture are chips and soda. Clear them out of the cupboards. They have no place in a healthy lunch.

Consider the ingredients and products you keep on hand. Read labels. Opt out of purchasing products that are high in preservatives, artificial flavors and colorings. When it comes to lunch, this can be difficult. There are hundreds of food products lining the shelves promising to make packing lunch easier. Walk on by. You can do better without the processed junk. Your children's teachers will thank you for clearing out the junk because kids that eat healthy food during the day have more energy, better concentration and perform better academically.

That's a fairly compelling reason to stay away from processed cheese dip and cookie pouches.

## PLAN AHEAD

I can't emphasize enough how much a little planning can ward off frustrations on busy mornings. Make as much as you can at the beginning of the week so making lunch can be a grab and go process. Another trick is to prep lunch just before bedtime as part of the wind down routine.

Stock your pantry with healthy, frequently eaten non-perishables. If you have a healthy supply of nut butter and honey, lunch can never be too far behind. Buy oatmeal, pasta, granola bars, etc. in bulk so you will always have enough fill-ins when you are running low on lunch ideas.

## PICKY EATERS

This is one of the hardest elements to lunch. How do you know that all that delicious, real food you prepare will get eaten by your picky eater? Well, you don't. There is a light at the end of the tunnel.

One of the best ways to battle a picky eater is to get them involved. Give them a list of lunch foods so you can discuss their preferences and mark their favorites. Put the desired foods in each lunch and introduce new foods a little bit at a time. Make a calendar and stick it to the fridge so kids know what to expect each day.

Most importantly, listen to their concerns or aversions to foods and try to create solutions together. We all like to have a say, kids are no different.

## simple lunch ideas



roasted turkey rolls  
tomatoes  
black beans  
edamame

black forest ham  
white cheddar cubes  
zucchini sticks  
fresh berries  
whole grain triscuits

easy chicken salad  
hard boiled egg  
green beans  
orange wedges

turkey blt wrap  
greek yogurt & honey  
banana  
granola bar

PB & honey dip  
cucumber slices  
trail mix  
apple  
whole grain toast squares

english muffin pizza  
kiwi

pasta (olive oil, salt, pepper)  
tomatoes  
broccoli

# START HERE!

## 1) CHOOSE A PROTEIN

### MEAT

lean black forest ham  
lean roast beef  
organic chicken breasts  
roasted pork loin  
roasted turkey  
salmon  
white meat tuna

### BEANS

black  
canellini  
garbanzo  
kidney  
pinto  
soy  
tofu

### DAIRY

cottage cheese  
cheddar cheese  
goat cheese  
part-skim mozzarella  
plain yogurt  
reduced fat cream cheese

## 2) PICK A VEGETABLE

### RAW

bell peppers  
carrots  
celery  
cherry tomatoes  
green beans  
zucchini

### STEAMED

broccoli  
cauliflower  
corn  
peas  
seaweed

### ROASTED

broccoli  
kale  
potatoes  
pumpkin  
seaweed (nori)  
tomatoes

## 3) GRAB SOME FRUIT

### FRESH

apples  
apricots  
avocado  
bananas  
cherry  
grape  
kiwi  
mango  
nectarine  
papayas  
peach  
pear  
pineapple  
raspberry  
strawberry

### DRIED

apricots  
mango  
nectarine  
papayas  
pineapple

## 4) ADD A GRAIN

bagels  
cereal  
couscous  
crackers  
english muffin  
oatmeal  
pasta  
pita  
polenta  
rice  
rice cakes  
tortilla  
wheat bread  
wheat crackers

## 5) MAYBE A TREAT?

applesauce  
granola  
pretzels  
trail mix



### DIPS

homemade ranch  
honey mustard  
hummus

pesto  
salsa  
yogurt herb



## FAVORITE SNACKS

String Cheese  
Apples

Popcorn  
Raisins

Trail Mix  
Yogurt

Homemade Granola Bars

Whole Grain Waffle  
Honey  
Sliced Banana

Whole Grain Pretzels  
Cheddar Cheese Cubes

Brown Rice Cakes  
Reduced Fat Cream Cheese  
Strawberries

Baked Tortilla Wedges  
Fresh Salsa

Cut Vegetables  
Honey Yogurt Dip

Apple Slices  
Peanut Butter

Hummus  
Carrot Sticks

Quesadilla  
Applesauce

Tomatoes  
Cottage Cheese

Avocado with Honey

Fruit and Yogurt Smoothie

Edamame