

4 Simple Swaps for a Healthier Lunchbox

A top-down view of a green lunchbox on a dark, textured surface. The lunchbox contains a sandwich on whole-grain bread with lettuce, a portion of sliced carrots, and a portion of broccoli. Surrounding the lunchbox are various fresh items: a red apple, a banana, several almonds, blueberries, strawberries, a green pear, and a clear plastic water bottle with a blue cap.

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What's for lunch? If you've got kids going back to school, chances are you're thinking about what you'll send with them in their lunchboxes. Try these simple changes to make their lunches healthier.

With kids going back to school, it is time to get back into the habit of packing lunch boxes. Here are some simple swaps that can help you make them more nutritious.

1) Use water or low-fat milk instead of sugared-beverages.

Water is great for keeping little ones hydrated. You can add fruit or herbs to infuse it with flavor. Let your kids pick their favorite ones to personalize their water bottles. Low-fat milk is another great option that packs a nutritious boost with calcium and protein.

2) Stick with whole grain bread and wraps instead of white.

Fiber in whole grains can help your kids feel fuller for longer. Whole grain breads and wraps also maintain more vitamins and minerals.

3) Add whole fruit instead of fruit snacks. As one of my favorite professors once said, "Grapes are nature's candy."

Fruit can be a sweet treat for your kids that provides much more nutrients and less preservatives and dyes than fruit snacks and other fruit-like candy.

4) Include some veggies instead of no veggies.

Vegetables can be one of the more challenging food groups to get kids to eat. Let them pick the vegetables they would like to pack.

Use dinnertime and snack time at home as opportunities to introduce them to a variety of vegetables to help them decide what kinds they like best.

Following these steps can help your lunchboxes follow USDA MyPlate recommendations and give your kids a balanced diet that will help get them through their school day. As you

prepare your lunchbox menus for the week, invite your kids to be involved. They will be more invested in eating something, if they feel like they have a say in what goes in their lunchbox.

These tips are great for adult lunches too. Taking your own lunch to work can help you eat well and save money.

This article was written by LaCee Jimenez – Food \$ense (SNAP-Ed) Coordinator