

# Tips for packing lunches... for kids and others

---



Make sure to **include a fruit or vegetable—or both—in every lunch box, every day**. Apples, grapes, oranges and bananas are the easiest, since they come in their own packaging and don't require refrigeration. Veggies and dip are always a hit. Cut up carrots, cucumbers, broccoli, or cauliflower and pack with a small container of your child's favorite low-fat dressing. Mix things up with sweet cherry tomatoes, sugar snap peas, or strips of sweet red or yellow peppers with humus or salsa as the dip.

Instead of sliced bread, **look for healthy whole-grain alternatives**, such as pita bread, tortillas, mini bagels, bread sticks, English muffins or pretzels.

Peanut butter and lunch meats are go-to school lunch proteins. But several times a week, **send alternatives**, such as low-fat yogurt with fruit and nuts, mozzarella "string" cheese, a hard-boiled egg, edamame soy beans, or refried beans and grated cheese rolled in a tortilla with salsa.

Many kinds of **leftovers**, such as chicken pieces and pasta, can be eaten cold. To package "**planned-overs**" like hearty soups, chili, or spaghetti from the night before, use a container that keeps foods hot. Create a salad by adding chunks of cooked turkey, pineapple or mandarin oranges and cashews to rice.

Drink options – **low-fat milk or water**. Soda pop has too much sugar, so do box juices.

**Cookies, chips, roll-ups, etc are not needed every day at lunch.** Include them only as a surprise so children learn that those foods are an occasional treat. When you do offer a snack, make sure it's a small portion.

**Include a favorite item along with new foods.** This way, if the new item isn't a hit, there is still something to eat.

**Keep foods safe.** Use insulated bags with reusable ice packs to keep foods cool. Use a lunch box with rigid sides to keep foods from getting crushed.

## IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY University Extension

... and justice for all

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Many materials can be made available in alternative formats for ADA clients. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Jack M. Payne, director, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Ames, Iowa. 8/09