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Packing School Lunches?

If you're going to be packing school lunch for your child, remember that your student needs foods from all five food groups to help her/him succeed in school. Students with a healthy diet may perform better academically. A balanced meal also helps students maintain energy levels during physical activity.

It can be challenging to provide nutritious meals on a budget that your child actually enjoys eating.

Healthy and delicious lunch foods that won't break the bank

A ripe banana with 2 tablespoons of peanut butter can be part of a nutritious and delicious lunch. *These foods provide your student with potassium, fiber, protein and healthy fat.*

A sandwich made with whole grain bread, lean protein like skinless chicken or turkey and assorted veggies such as lettuce and tomato make a great start to lunch. *Add fruit and dairy to complete a balanced meal.*

Look for crackers made with whole grains. Some are available with added veggies - pair them with low-fat cheeses as part of lunch. *Students need the healthy carbs in whole grains for sustainable energy and fiber. Even young people need fiber rich foods every day for proper digestion and elimination.*

Fresh fruits and vegetables, when in season, save money and provide many nutrients for growing students. Package them in small bags for school lunches and include hummus as a protein rich dip. Don't forget the milk. Fat-free is recommended for school age children. *Only the saturated fat is missing from fat-free dairy. All the nutrients, such as calcium, are still in there.*

Avoid sending sugary foods in your student's lunchbox. Processed sugar adds empty calories, provides no nutrients and can contribute to obesity and poor dental health.

Help your child be successful in school by packing lunches that nourish and energize them for their day.

For more information visit our website at <http://santarosa.ifas.ufl.edu> or call Ginny Hinton, Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent, at (850) 623-3868 between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. weekdays or via email at ginnyh@santarosa.fl.gov.

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