



## HEALTHY LUNCH TIPS FOR BACK TO SCHOOL

It's back to school time. This can be a stressful time for parents. With so many things to do to get them ready for back to school it can be difficult to plan healthy meals. Kids can be picky eaters, they may want the processed junk food they see in commercials, and it is sometimes difficult to control what they get at school.

However, despite all of these reasons, healthy eating is so important to your child's overall health and how well they learn in school. Packing your child's lunch box with good nutritious food will give them more energy to learn and play at school. If you feed them foods high in processed sugars and fats, they will feel tired and will not be able to concentrate in classrooms.

Remember, good eating habits are first learned at home! Teach them how to eat healthy now and prevent diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

### Let's start with some shocking facts about lunch meats:

- A Swedish study found that children who ate 12 hotdogs per month have a 9x increased risk of getting leukemia.
- A 10 year study found women who ate 1 slice of processed meat 2-3 times a week over 10 years have a 50% increased risk of getting colon cancer.
- For every 50 grams of processed meat you eat on a daily basis (that's about one hot dog) you increase your risk of colorectal cancer by 21 percent.
- You increase your risk of prostate cancer by 10% for every 10 grams of increased intake of processed meats.
- Results of a 7 year study of a 190,000 people, ages 45 to 75, by the Cancer Research Center of Hawaii and the University of Southern California found eating processed meats will increase your risk of pancreatic cancer by 68%.

**It's clear! Processed meats have been linked to increased risk of cancer.** Processed meats include smoked meats, hot dogs, sausages, bologna, ham bacon, pastrami, pepperoni, corned beef and beef jerky.



## **Why would we want to feed these poisonous chemicals to our children?**

### **Some preservatives to watch out for include:**

- Sodium nitrate/ nitrite. This is used as a preservative and is associated with cancers of the mouth, bladder, esophagus, stomach, brain and colon.
- BHA and BHT which are both known carcinogens
- Smoked meats or smoke flavor. These contain a number of unknown chemicals that don't even have to be listed on the packaging.
- Corn syrup which is worse than sugar! This can lead to diabetes, obesity and other health problems.
- Aspartame which has many health risks including damage to our immune system, thyroid, brain and digestive system.

We don't really know what is in these processed foods that are causing cancers. The best choice is to avoid these processed meats completely!

## **What about all the sugar that is found in commercially prepared foods and drinks?**

Many parents are under a misconception about fruit juices. In many cases, juices are just as bad as sodas, even though they may be "fruit based"

Some examples:

- A 12oz can of coca-cola contains 39 g of sugar (about 12 tsp)
- 8oz Snapple iced tea contains 23g of sugar
- 8oz minute maid orange juice contains 24g of sugar
- 8oz apple juice contains 26g of sugar
- 8oz Nesquik chocolate milk contains 29g of sugar

**The incidence of childhood obesity has tripled over the last 20 years!**

**There has been a 10-to-30 fold increase in American children with type 2 diabetes in the past 10 to 15 years. The Canadian statistics are close.**

**In the next 15 years, it is anticipated that the global incidence of type 2 diabetes in children will increase by up to 50 per cent.**

**Type 2 Diabetes was once considered an adult onset disease. Now more and more children are getting diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes (which is linked with obesity and diet).**



**Know what you are feeding your children! Read labels! The best food is fresh food!  
The best drink is water!**

**So what are you going to put in your kid's lunch boxes that are healthy and simple (and they will eat!)**

- Include a wide range of fresh fruit and vegetables. Cut the veggies into fun shapes using a cookie cutter. Include healthy whole grains instead of white flour products. Minimize sugar, substitute with fruit and healthy sweeteners.
- Avoid processed meats completely. I suggest roasting beef, chicken or turkey and using the fresh meat slices in sandwiches or wraps. You may also consider buying a fresh roasted non-medicated chicken from healthy markets. Some healthy markets roast their fresh meats daily (Whole Foods, Meinharts and Choices have fresh meats in their deli section).
- Avocado makes a great spread instead of butter or mayonnaise.
- Frozen fruits on a stick make a great frozen treat.
- Try almond butter, jam and banana sandwich on whole grain bread or crackers.
- Children love cut up foods they can dip. Cut some veggies into different shapes (such as carrots, cucumber, tomatoes) and dip into plain yogurt flavored with cinnamon and vanilla (avoid flavored yogurt which can have up to 33grams of sugar)
- Avoid fruit leathers which are high in sugar, additives and preservatives. Choose fresh fruit instead. Try placing cut up fruit on a skewer for a fun Fruit Kebab
- Dried fruits contain a lot of sugar. Raisins contain 30g of sugar per 1/3 cup! Choose fresh fruit instead.
- Choose homemade popcorn in a brown lunch bag (minus the butter) instead of chips.
- Baked tortilla chips and salsa make a great snack!
- Annie's cheddar bunnies are a healthier alternative to Goldfish crackers that are high in sugar and fat.
- Unsweetened apple sauce is better than a fruit cup.
- Baked pita chips or bagel chips with hummus or guacamole dip is a great snack.
- Granola bars can be high in sugar like a candy bar. Try the recipe at the end of this article for a healthy homemade granola bar.
- Lettuce wraps are a fun way to wrap healthy meats and vegetables. Try the chicken and apple lettuce wrap recipe at the end of this article.



**Remember, the best food is fresh food! Vary the vegetables, fruits and whole grains so your kids don't get bored. Use different shapes to keep them interested in the foods. Avoid juices. To get your kids used to water, dilute fruit juice with water, slowly reducing the amount of juice you are adding.**

Your healthy eating choices will lay a great foundation for your child's future eating habits. Childhood diseases are on the rise. Most are preventable, and start with a good foundation in diet, exercise and sleep.

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## **HEALTHY GRANOLA BARS (from BestHealth Magazine)**

### **Servings**

20 bars

### **Prep Time**

About 40 minutes, including cooking time

### **Ingredients**

- ½ cup (125 mL) butter
- ½ cup (125 mL) maple syrup
- ¼ cup (50 mL) packed brown sugar
- 2½ cups (625 mL) rolled oats (not quick, instant or one-minute)
- ⅓ cup (75 mL) wheat germ or bran
- 2 tsp (10 mL) vanilla
- 1 tsp (5 mL) finely grated orange rind
- 1 tsp (5 mL) cinnamon
- ¼ tsp (1 mL) salt
- ⅓ cup (75 mL) dried fruit (cranberries, raisins, cherries, or finely chopped apricots, figs and/or pitted dates)

### **Directions**

- 1. Preheat oven to 325°F (160°C). Line a 9-inch (2.5-L) square baking pan with parchment paper, leaving a 1-inch (2.5-cm) overhang on two sides so you can easily lift the baked bars out of the pan.
- 2. In a large saucepan, heat butter, maple syrup and sugar over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Boil for 1 minute; remove saucepan from heat. Stir in oats, wheat germ, vanilla, orange rind, cinnamon and salt until well combined. Stir in dried fruit until well combined.



- 3. Spread mixture evenly in pan, pressing down firmly using base of a measuring cup. Bake 30 to 35 minutes, until a deep golden colour. Cool completely in pan on wire rack. Once cooled, use parchment to lift to a cutting board; cut into bars with a large serrated knife. (Save any crumbs; they're delicious sprinkled over yogurt or fruit.) Bars can be stored in an airtight container for up to 1 week

**Nutrients per serving:** 125 calories, 5.5 g fat, 18 mg calcium, 79 mg sodium, 17.6 g carbohydrates, 2.1 g protein, 1.4 g fibre

## Curried Chicken and Apple Lettuce Wraps

This wrap is a play on the regular and sometimes boring chicken salad sandwich, but without mayo and with the addition of sweet and crunchy apple and the spice of curry and turmeric.

By Paul Finkelstein

### Ingredients

1 cup (250 mL) diced cooked chicken breast

1/4 stalk celery, diced

1/4 cup (50 mL) apple, skin on, diced

Small handful cilantro, finely chopped

1/4 cup (50 mL) low-fat yogurt

1 tsp (5 mL) curry powder

Juice of one lemon

Pinch each salt and pepper

4 big leaves red or Boston lettuce (Be sure the lettuce you choose as your wrap is sturdy enough to hold in the chicken).