



Back to School: Back to Packing Lunches By: Renee DeFrang RDN CDE CPT

Hard to believe but it is that time again, “back to school” is here. Summer always seem to go way too fast! Packing healthy lunches can sometimes be difficult. Here is 3 tips to make packing lunches go more smoothly:

1. **5 Food Groups-** Any easy way to pack lunches is to include something from each food group; fruit, vegetable, protein, dairy and grain. Some examples include but are not limited to:

- *Fruits-* apples, banana, pear, peaches, plums, pineapple, berries, melons, kiwi
- *Vegetables-* cucumbers, carrots, celery, tomatoes, sugar snap peas, broccoli, cauliflower, red pepper strips, zucchini, squash. Add some dip hummus or ranch
- *Protein-* turkey, ham, chicken, beef, eggs, nuts, seeds, peanut butter, dried beans, cheese, yogurt
- *Dairy-* milk, soy milk, cheese, yogurt
- *Grains-* whole grain bread, whole grain crackers, oatmeal, whole grain pasta, brown rice, whole grain cereal, whole grain tortilla, whole grain bagel



2. **Variety is key-** Have a rule of not packing the same thing two days in a row. Have a rotation of at least 5 different lunch options. Rotating will ensure better balance of nutrients, prevent boredom and help your child explore tastes and textures. Save “new” foods for home but still expose different foods at lunch time. Examples include but are not limited to:

- *Monday-* Peanut butter and Jelly Sandwich on whole grain bread, string cheese, apple, cucumber and hummus
- *Tuesday-* Greek Yogurt with blueberries and granola(or granola bar), sugar snap peas
- *Wednesday-* Whole wheat bagel, hard-boiled egg, peaches, milk, red peppers and hummus

- *Thursday*- Whole grain crackers, cheese, banana, milk, carrots and ranch
- *Friday*- Pasta salad (whole grain pasta, tomatoes, cucumbers, olives and Italian dressing), ham roll up, kiwi, soymilk



3. **Pack lunches together**- Having your child help you pack their lunch with you gives them “ownership” of their lunch helping with intake as well as gives you a chance to teach your child about good nutrition. Explain to them why you have a variety of foods and which foods belong to which food group. Knowledge is power.



Happy back to school! Yours in health, Renee