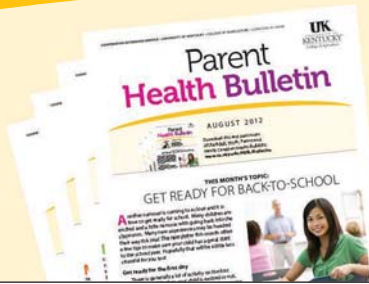


# Parent Health Bulletin



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K-State Research & Extension  
Atchison County Office  
405 Main/PO Box 109  
Effingham, KS 66023  
913-833-5450

## THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: SCHOOL LUNCHES



**W**hen school is back in session, you may or may not have to worry about packing your child's lunch. There is one thing for sure however: you want to make sure your child eats as healthy as possible. When the school year is starting, it is a good time to talk to your child about the importance of eating a good lunch.

Eating a good lunch not only gives your child the ability to stay awake and alert in class, but a healthy lunch can also help your child grow. By eating a healthy variety of fruits and vegetables, your child is getting vitamins and minerals that help fight sickness.

Here are some things that you can talk to your child about when it comes to school lunches:

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- **Choose fruits and vegetables.** Talk to your child about the importance of eating fruits and vegetables. They are the cornerstone of healthy lunches. They are full of vitamins, minerals and fiber. If your child says that he or she does not like fruits and vegetables, begin to try some of them at home. Sometimes a child needs to try something many times before they come to like it. Not to mention that the fiber in fruits and vegetables helps us feel full for a longer period of time.
- **Whole grains.** There are many types of grains that we eat on a daily basis. Grains include cereals, breads, pasta and rice. It is important to offer your child (and yourself) whole grains. Whole grains are healthier choices than refined grains such as white bread and white rice.
- **Think about the drink.** Milk is often the drink of choice for lunches, and a much better choice than soda. If your child does not like milk, water is the best option. Juices may seem like a healthy choice, but many of them are filled with extra sugar. Talk to your child about drinking milk with his or her lunch.
- **Variety.** Is your child's lunch always the same? When a person eats the same foods every day that person is getting the same nutrients every day. By eating a variety of foods, your child will be sure to get many different vitamins and minerals. Encourage your child to try different foods that are served on different days throughout the month. Bonus: your child is less likely to get bored with lunch.
- **Balance.** Just as variety is important, so is balance. You should encourage your child to eat foods from all of the food groups. By balancing out your meals you are not eating all fruits, or all vegetables, or only bread or meat. It is important to eat some of each during the lunch meal.



## Minding your manners

Now is also a good time to remind your child to mind his or her manners when eating lunch at school. Acknowledge that he or she may want to talk and laugh with friends, but also talk about some manners that are important. Some of the items you may want to talk about include: remembering not to talk when eating, using the tableware correctly and not making fun of another's lunch.

## What if you have to pack a lunch?

If you have to pack a lunch many of the above tips are the same. Perhaps your child can even help you.

### SOURCES:

- Nemours Kidshealth. School Lunches  
[http://kidshealth.org/kid/homework/lunch/school\\_lunches.html](http://kidshealth.org/kid/homework/lunch/school_lunches.html)
- USDA Food and Nutrition Service National School Lunch program (NSLP)  
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/national-school-lunch-program>

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Written by: Nicole Peritore  
Edited by: Connee Wheeler  
Designed by: Rusty Manseau  
Stock images: 123RF.com