

# Healthy Packed Options

One of the biggest changes for a kid coming off of summer vacation is getting back into the habit of quick, easy lunches. This can be a challenge for parents too. After a summer of having time to prepare a variety of meals, the school lunch structure can take some getting used to.

Many of us want the healthiest options for our children, but finding the time to make this happen can be difficult. With creativity — and a child who isn't too picky — there are many ways to incorporate a diverse array of healthy foods.

## FRUITS AND VEGGIES

The meat-cheese-cracker lunch package options are convenient, but they're also lacking fruits and vegetables. As more and more research comes out showing the effects of processed foods on our overall health, consider making your own variety pack for your child's lunch.

Fresh meats and cheeses can still be a staple of the meal, but don't forget to add a container of grapes or a full apple. Celery sticks with a side of peanut butter is a convenient option, and green peppers can easily be sliced and packed for a healthy side option.

## WARM IT UP

Lunch doesn't always have to be cold. Your A-plus student deserves a little variety. Purchase a lunchbox-sized thermos that can store heated foods for up to a full day. Instructions will vary with each product, but you basically will need to fill the container with boiling water and let it stand for a few minutes. Next, heat



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up your food to the desired temperature and replace the water with the food in the thermos.

This approach opens a whole new world of lunchtime options, including soups, casseroles and leftovers. It also

allows you to send fresh, healthy meals for your child and gives you great variety throughout the course of the school year.

## PREPARE

We've all done the lunchtime

packing rush. You lose track of time in the morning and are forced to throw together a hodgepodge meal for your child's lunch. This can lead to packing for convenience instead of healthfulness.

When possible, try to at least

come up with the idea for lunch the night before. You can still pack it in the morning, but having a plan in place before the rush of the school day can go a long way toward making sure you're sending your child with a healthy lunch.