

# Tips for Packing Healthy School Lunches

**Actual time for eating at school lasts about 15–20 minutes and is filled with distractions. Make simple, easily opened lunches that don't require peeling or special tools.**

Salsa, hummus, or fruit dips with baked chips, whole wheat chips or whole wheat pretzels boost vitamins and fiber in the lunch box.

## Think about different types of breads for sandwiches and dippers:

- Crackers
- Pita pockets
- Mini bagels
- Tortillas or wraps cut in half
- Try raisin or cinnamon bread
- “Fun-wiches”: Cut sandwiches into long strips, triangles, or into shapes with a large cookie cutter!

## Luncheon Meats

- Once opened, packaged cold cuts will only last 3–5 days.
- Cold cuts sliced fresh from the deli will last 1–3 days if stored properly.
- Be sure to store ALL luncheon meats in an airtight plastic bag in the coldest part of the refrigerator.

## Dating on food packages is voluntary. Here's what they mean:

- “Sell by” date – means the last date it should be sold in the store. Don't purchase products that are past that date.
- “Best by” date – means the product will have the best qualities such as flavor, texture and taste if used by that date.
- “Use by” date – means just that: don't use a product after this date.

## Make sure to think about food safety!

- small gel packs or frozen juice boxes. The juice will keep other foods cool and will thaw to the right temperature and consistency by lunchtime.
- Use an insulated thermos for hot foods like soups and stews and cold salads, too. For best results, rinse it out with ice water to chill the thermos before adding cold foods, and very hot water to heat it before adding hot soups.

## What about trail mix/granola?

Short-term performance benefits may derive from the fact that this high-energy snack combines rapidly digested carbohydrates from dried fruits with longer-lasting fat and protein from nuts, plus the mix of vitamins and trace elements found in any fruit. Long-term benefits in academic performance have been associated with a diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which are found in nuts. Include healthy additions like dried fruits, unsalted nuts, pretzels, baked crackers, or cereals. Kids love to munch on something crunchy and sweet or savory!

