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## Healthy Choices for Back to School

Yes parents, it's almost that time again...sending our children back to school. Where has the summer gone? This means that you must decide whether to give them school lunches or sack lunches. It will be up to each of us as parents to make the right choices for our children's lunches, after all, they are what we feed them. Here is where planning, food choice management and involving the kids comes in to play. They are dependent on you for the do's and don'ts of a good and healthy diet!

First, you NEED to know what the schools are feeding your children. Second, educate yourself on good nutrition and then teach your family, or consult the proper health professionals, and by proper I mean one who has been trained in nutrition. You may not know this but the majority of medical doctors have NOT been trained in nutrition. I found this out the hard way. Know who you're paying for advice on healthy living.

Giving children proper nutrition can increase their energy, improve their grades, help them be more focused, get better rest, maintain a healthy weight, and the list goes on. One excellent place to get accurate and scientific information on children and nutrition is to look to the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. You can find them on the web. Another great place to locate healthy information for your family is at the University of Michigan's site, [www.med.umich.edu/umim](http://www.med.umich.edu/umim).

Unfortunately, American schools are not receiving passing grades on their school lunch programs. In this case, you only get what you pay or plan for. Here's the good news, you have the option to make a difference in your child's day by giving them healthy lunch choices. Here are a few ideas on serving up a good lunch for little Jimmy or Jenna, keep an open mind and remember, change is necessary to give them what they absolutely need:

(The easier and more convenient it is for them to eat, the more likely they are to eat it.)

**Fresh fruits**, either whole or sliced, individual or mixed.

**Raw veggies** with dip or on pitas or whole grain bread and hummus (all produce should be washed thoroughly).

**Salads** - a large variety of salad recipes are available, not just those with greens.

**Soup** recipes are also available in abundance. Using beans to replace meats is a healthier choice for them and will give them their protein.

**Sandwiches** made with whole grain bread or made into wraps. Go easy on the heavy condiments and the meat and dairy. Add sliced veggies for live nutrients and enzymes. And remember, **Hydrate!** Hydrate! Hydrate! Send them with bottled purified water, either from a healthy home source or from the store. Tap water is not a good source for drinking water.

Healthy snacks are a compliment to their day. Things such as trail mix, raw nuts, organic un sulphured dried fruits, fresh fruits, carrot/veggie juice, smoothies, and veggie sticks with nut or seed butters, and fresh apple sauce are nutrient dense and life giving foods. These are quick and simple snack ideas that will give them the energy they need to get through the day in a healthy and tasty way.

Stay away from highly processed, sugar laden “foods” that tend to zap their energy and cause them to crash later, not to mention lowering their immunity. Our bodies are made up of 100 trillion living cells and require living foods to nourish them and give them what they need to repair and rebuild healthy cells. Children’s diets should consist of approximately 50 percent live foods. How are your children doing with that? How are you doing with that as the example to them? Tough questions that require us as parents to put more thought into every decision we are making for our children. They only know what we teach them. Make great choices for them and for you.

Starting good eating habits for them early will benefit them throughout their entire life. It may take a little more time and effort but after all, they’re worth it!

Remember that there are more ways to nourish our children than with food and water. They require your focused time and your ears for listening to them, your arms for hugging them, and your mouth for letting them know that you love them. Praising their good efforts, even when barely noticeable, and sharing with them what you do want from them vs. what you don’t want from them will nourish their minds and their hearts. Making a positive difference in the lives of our children will help them grow in every area of their life and the world will be a better place for it. Raising strong, healthy children is what all of us as parents want so let’s all be living examples of what it means to be just that, strong and healthy. Also know that our attitude on healthy living is reflected in their attitude on healthy living, so what’s yours?

Today is the first day of the rest of your life, cliché’ I know, but true right? How will you *choose* to make your day, your attitude, your health count? Every day and in every way you can become better and better, healthier and healthier...it’s never too late to make the right choices. I know you can do it so let’s make this happen, for them and for you. Be strong and live healthy my friends!