

NEWS RELEASE

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August 9, 2021

PACKING BACK-TO-SCHOOL LUNCHES

School will start on Monday and for many parents it requires preparing lunches. Parents want their children to eat healthy, but it can sometimes be a challenge. However, it is not an impossible task. Here are some ideas to help your child eat healthier.

- Involve them in the planning process. Children are more likely to eat a healthy lunch if they are engaged in planning and preparation. Work with them to find items they like. Encourage them to choose healthy options and have a short nutrition lesson. Discuss why these foods are good for proper growth and learning.
- Variety is important. Avoid getting in a routine of the same foods every day. Mix it up and try new foods, but keep a few tried and true options available.
- Shop the grocery store. Manufacturers have developed kid friendly foods that are nutritious. Many foods are now packaged in individual serving sizes that make it fun to eat. Try to stick with fresh fruits and vegetables that are ready-to-serve or make your own individual packages once you get home. This option will save money!
- Try something different. Satisfying lunches can include turkey and cheese with spinach leaves, or tuna salad in a whole wheat pita pocket. Try peanut butter and banana slices on raisin bread for an “almost-dessert” meal.
- Remember snacks. Great crunchy, salty snacks include pretzels, popcorn, cereal or trail mix. You can purchase these individually packaged or make your own at home. Another option is dried fruit chips.

- Add pizzazz! Arrange carrot sticks, celery sticks, cherry tomatoes, broccoli, and other veggies in a small container. Add a little ranch dressing as a dip.
- Be creative! Use cookie cutters to cut out sandwich breads. Younger children will love this idea.
- Purchase single-serve applesauce or other fruit to add sweetness to the lunch. You can also prepare your own single servings, which will again save money.

Of course, lunchrooms serve great lunches! Be sure to get a copy of the menu so your child can plan to eat some lunches in the cafeteria. There may be some days where your child will be happy to eat off the line.

Lunches don't have to be boring! For more information on preparing healthy lunches or for additional nutrition information, contact the Howard County Extension Office at 870-845-7517 or visit our office located on the second floor of the courthouse. The Cooperative Extension Service is part of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture.

Recipe of the Week

Here is a recipe to use for packing that great school lunch. Remember to add an ice pack or a frozen bottle of water to keep foods safe. This recipe would also make a great meal for your family.

Crunchy Hawaiian Chicken Wrap

¼ cup light mayonnaise

1/8 cup white vinegar

¼ cup sugar

1 teaspoon poppy seeds

1 ½ teaspoons garlic powder

1 ½ teaspoons onion powder

1 ½ teaspoons chili powder

2 cups fresh broccoli, shredded

1 ½ cups fresh carrots, peeled, shredded

¼ cup canned crushed pineapple, in 100% juice, drained

1 cup fresh spinach, chopped

3 cups cooked diced chicken

6 whole-wheat tortillas, 10”

In a small mixing bowl, combine mayonnaise, vinegar, sugar, poppy seeds, garlic powder, onion powder, and chili powder for the dressing. Mix well. Cover and refrigerate.

Combine broccoli, carrots, pineapple, and spinach in a large bowl. Stir in dressing and chicken. Mix well. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate.

For each wrap, place 2/3 cup filling on tortilla. Roll up burrito style. Cut diagonally in half. Serves 6.

Note: For lunches, consider sending the filling in a separate container. The child can then spread on the tortilla before eating.

Nutrition information per serving: Calories – 308, Fat – 6 g, Sodium – 408 mg, Carbohydrates – 42 g, protein – 24 g.