

Healthy Eats on the Go

March is Nutrition Month and our focus this year is on finding ways to eat well all day long, whether at work, school or during family outings. Eating away from home has become the norm for busy families, whether it's a quick snack at the mall or a make-shift meal between activities. This year's theme "Make it and Take it!" is all about healthy eating on the go.

I know first-hand how not having the right food handy at the right time can cause a young child to have a meltdown. Bringing food from home will not only prevent meltdowns, but will also help avoid last minute stops at snack shops or the fast food drive through. Once you're organized it is easy to do.

First, having the right gear is essential. Watch for sales. Must-have items include insulated lunch bags/packs, a variety of small containers with lids, and a reusable ice pack. Reusable cutlery and reusable drink containers are also helpful to have. The right gear makes it easier to pack healthy and safe food for you and your family.

Second, have easy to grab pack-and-go items ready in your fridge, freezer and pantry. Here are some of my favourites:

- **Gourmet home-made lunchables:** Sliced chicken breast, cheese cut into triangles, whole grain crackers, red pepper strips and apple slices. Yum! Use leftover chicken, turkey or roast beef instead of deli meats to save money, and cut the amount of salt by more than half.
- **Rainbow veggies and dip:** Wash and cut a variety of colourful veggies and store them in sealed containers in the fridge. Pack into baggies or containers as needed with pre-portioned dip. Plain Greek yogurt mixed with a bit of salad dressing makes an easy, protein and calcium loaded dip. Bean dips are also terrific and provide long lasting energy.
- **Muffin tin creations:** Muffin tins are perfect for making little meat loaves and crustless quiche – regular or mini size. Use your favourite recipes and simply portion into the tins (note they will cook fast). Meat muffins freeze well. Mini quiches store well in the fridge for a few days. Great for lunches or those make-shift dinners away from home.
- **Homemade nut/seed/cereal mixes:** For a nut free combo try sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, raisins, chopped dried apricots, dried unsweetened cereal, shredded coconut and/or a few mini semi-sweet chocolate chips.

Lastly, involve your kids in making home-packed meals and snacks early on. This way they will grow up experiencing food brought from home as the normal and best way to eat. Plus when kids help pack their own lunches and snacks they tend to enjoy their food more and waste less. Win-win for everyone!

For more tips check out: <http://www.nutritionmonth.ca/>

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