

# Parent Engagement



## Lunch Tips

**There's nothing worse than opening a lunch pack at the end of the day and finding that only the cookies got eaten. How can you make sure your child consumes the energy he needs to fuel a busy day?**

**Involve kids in the planning, shopping and packing.** Perhaps you could post a list on the fridge of lunch favourites.

**Aim for variety, and interest.** Make a homemade "lunchable" with slices of cheese or roast chicken, toasted bread cubes, some orange sections or carrot sticks and yogurt dip in a divided container.

**Build a better sandwich.** This mainstay is easy to manage and can contain four food groups in one tidy package. Using frozen slices of whole grain bread when you make up sandwiches means it's fresher at

lunchtime. Consider alternatives like mini pitas with hummus or apple slices and cream cheese rolled in a tortilla.

**Feature fruits and vegetables.** Research shows that some kids don't eat enough of these. Remember too that crunchy fruits and veggies are nature's toothbrush. A low-fat dip will make broccoli "trees" or red pepper slices more tasty. Try cutting a kiwi in half and include a spoon so kids can scoop out the pulp. Section hard-to-peel fruits like an orange and send in a container.

**Include a source of calcium.** Kids need two servings a day, so find out if your school has a milk program. Other tasty options are puddings with milk listed as the first ingredient, cheese strings or mini-yogurts.

**Packing tips for the balanced day.** A lunch container with two separate compartments works well, or you can label foods 1 and 2 and include a drink for each break.

**Did you know?** Research shows that 25 percent of kids' calories come from junk food. Try substituting whole grain mini-muffins for chips, and milk or water for pop and flavoured fruit drinks.

## Mental Health Minute

### Five tips to promote mental health in your child or youth

**Be positive role models.** Children need to see us express our feelings, talk over a problem with our partner, or see things from someone else's point of view.

**Promote a healthy lifestyle.** Give healthy food, make sure they get enough sleep and exercise.

**Ask them how their day went.** Let them know when they've done something well (like trying hard, being patient or kind, or getting better at something). Focus on the effort, not always the result. If something

is bothering or stressing them, ask if they need help to solve the problem.

**Ask them how they're feeling about things.** Some children may not know how to express themselves. Help them with language to 'name' and express feelings ("Oh, that must have been frustrating to have to wait so long...")

**Help them see things from another's point of view.** Children need to see us do this

("My boss was in a really bad mood today, but she's been going through a rough time caring for her mother")

*If you found these tips helpful, you might like "Tips for Parents on Building Healthy Relationships with their Teenager" found at [www.tlidsb.ca](http://www.tlidsb.ca)*

