

Stand-Out Lunches and Water
By Stacy Fowler, M.S., C.P.T.
www.eldoradosprings.com
303-604-6000*

Has this ever happened to you, it's 8:45 in the morning and the school bus is scheduled to arrive in three minutes when your child announces that, oops, there's no hot lunch today since the class is going on a field trip? Not only do you have to pack a suitable lunch in 180 seconds, but you have the world's pickiest eater watching over your shoulder. Been there?

If you let your child choose, she will pick soda – instead of milk or water, and chips – instead of carrot sticks or grapes – a fun lunch, for sure, but not so healthy. At a time when your child should be building peak bone mass, healthy lunches are vital to the growth and development of his or her brain cells. Poor eating habits can lead to a host of health problems. Only 2% of children today meet the dietary goals of the food pyramid. Fifteen percent of today's youth are overweight – not surprising since 38% of every food dollar is spent on eating out.

Here are some tips to take the confusion out of healthy eating – and some ideas for expanding healthy food and beverage possibilities.

- Remember to pack bottled water for lunch and hydration during the day. My favorite is Eldorado Natural Spring Water – see below for information about their back-to-school special.
- Include your kids in choosing fruits and vegetables by holding taste testing “events” and having them grow their own vegetable garden.
- Discuss the pros and cons of various food choices. For example, veggies build muscles while a diet of sweets clogs your arteries and hurts your heart.
- Teach balance and moderation. One or two cookies a day is okay – the entire cookie jar is not!
- Keep healthy snacks, such as grapes, carrots, and apple slices washed and readily available.
- Split or share high fat items like that delectable ice cream treat you crave on hot days – ask to have it split into two cups or request two spoons.
- When cooking casseroles, spaghetti, stir fry, etc, prepare a little extra and store it in separate containers to use in your kids' and spouse's lunches during the week.
- Variety is the spice of life. Don't fix the same sandwich every day.

Think of a traffic light – red, yellow, green – and imagine foods in these categories:

Red Light Food – Eat these foods sparingly

Fats

Sweets

Fried Foods

Hydrogenated Foods

Yellow Light Food – These foods are necessary for your health, but in moderation

Grains

Fiber

Proteins

Green Light Food – Eat and drink your little hearts out

Vegetables

Fruits

Water

So, think in terms of substitutions.

- Instead of chocolate chip cookies, try fig bars or toasted cinnamon bread
- Instead of fruit roll ups, try dried fruit
- Instead of soda, try water or 100% fruit juice
- Instead of regular chips, try baked chips
- Instead of ice cream, try yogurt with berries
- Instead of cake, try muffins
- Instead of pie, try low fat pudding with graham crackers sprinkled in
- Instead of a candy bar, try a small energy bar
- Instead of fried, try grilled

Here are some unique choices for lunches – try them, you'll like them:

- Tortilla wraps – fill them with peanut butter, sliced turkey, or beans and cheese
- Lettuce wraps – fill them with ground turkey or chicken
- Pizza
- Stir fry
- Spaghetti
- Bagels with low fat cream cheese
- Pita breads filled with your choice
- Turkey chili with beans
- Presley's pancake burritos – pancakes with peanut butter and honey rolled into a burrito – bananas optional
- Edamames
- Trail mix
- Carrots with dip
- Sliced apples and other fruits
- Low fat granola
- Graham crackers
- Vanilla wafers and fig cookies
- Low-fat pudding

*Call or email Eldorado Spring Water to get a free case of water when you sign up for service.