

# Smilematters

## PATIENT FACT SHEET

### Tips for School Lunches That Will Keep Your Child Smiling

You've gotten your kids off to a great new school year with a visit to the dentist — now here are some ideas and tips that will keep them smiling!

Packing school lunches that are satisfying, fun and healthy can be tricky. Many traditional pre-packaged lunch foods contain a lot of sugar or feature chewy ingredients that can stick on teeth for hours. Luckily, there are many great new ideas and products that can get kids excited about opening that lunch box — and are easy for parents to pack up, too.

#### **Choose Drinks Wisely**

Small bottles of water are the best — start the night before by removing a small amount of the water, then popping it into the freezer overnight. The water will thaw by the time lunch comes around but will save space by doubling as an ice pack. If your child isn't crazy about plain water or gets bored, let him or her pick flavored drops made for adding taste to bottled water. If your child still isn't thrilled, go for plain or flavored milk — the extra calcium is good for tooth enamel.

#### **Finger Foods Make Lunch Fast and Fun**

Kids don't get a lot of time to eat lunches these days, and parents don't have a lot of time for packing, either. Finger foods are a great solution! Use snack-size lunch bags or containers to pack a week's worth of munchies in one evening.

Muffin tin goodies are all the range — just check out Pinterest or other websites for endless ideas to substitute for the boring old sandwiches. Here's an easy one that's full of protein to keep away that afternoon slump: Spray muffin tins with cooking spray, line cups with sliced ham, sprinkle with your child's

favorite shredded cheese, crack an egg into the center of the ham cup, sprinkle with salt and pepper, then bake at 350 degrees until the egg is set through, and you're done. There are even ideas if your child (or a classmate) has food allergies. Tortilla wraps keep well as long as wet ingredients are layered between meats and cheeses so the tortilla doesn't get soggy. Slice 'em into fun pinwheels.

You can cut veggies and fruit into bite-size pieces or wedges and pack with small packets or containers of dips (or check your deli for fruit/veggie/dip combos that are pre-packaged). String an array of fruit on skewers for an enticing snack for older kids. Freeze tubes of yogurt or drinkable yogurts for another cool treat. Low-fat pretzels are a great substitute for popcorn or chips. Graham crackers pair well with cream cheese or yogurt dips, or make your own trail mix (have your child help) with nuts, crackers, pretzels, cereal, and a small amount of dried fruit or chocolate chips for a bit of sweetness.

#### **Cool Tools for Cleanup**

Consider if your child has the opportunity to do a little tooth cleanup after lunch. Some classrooms may be outfitted with a brushing station (ask your teacher if this is a possibility). Pack disposable flossers or even disposable, pre-pasted mini toothbrushes for teens and older kids — these can really come in handy for those with braces!