

# PURSUIT

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Florida Blue   
BetterYou 

A monthly wellness newsletter from Better You



## Food Variety + A System + Helping Hands = Happy Lunches for Kids

March is National Nutrition Month. If you pack your children's lunch every day, it's a good time to make sure lunch is happy and healthy for them. The easiest way to do that is with a system that works for both you and your kids.

Start with a checklist of the food groups that go into every lunch: some protein, a grain, at least one fruit and vegetable, a calcium-rich food or beverage, and perhaps a small sweet or additional snack item. Let your kids help add foods under each group, then choose from the list to pack their lunch. You can even color-code each group, for example, red for proteins and green for vegetables. Have the kids make a "lunch rainbow" with their items.

Encourage them to vary their picks, but don't worry if they want the same lunch for two weeks in a row. Take comfort in knowing it's balanced and nutritious. Try to work around pickiness by creating alternatives. If your child doesn't like sandwiches, offer a cracker or a waffle sandwich, or wrap turkey

or roast beef around a cheese stick with a favorite veggie stick.

### Here are some other kid-friendly lunch tips:

- Buy a colorful or character lunchbox with sections to make it visually appealing.
- Use ice packs to keep refrigerated foods cold.
- Use a cookie cutter for fun sandwich shapes.
- Make a fruit or vegetable kebob with a dip—yogurt for fruit, or salsa or hummus for veggies.
- Add color to sandwiches with spinach and veggies along with the meat.
- Pack soup in a thermos next to whole grain crackers.
- Try a quinoa or pasta salad with edamame, veggies, raisins and a little dressing.

Being involved will help your kids appreciate their lunch choices. You can always sneak in a note to them too!

### Lunch Friendly Ideas for Food Groups

**PROTEIN:** eggs, nut butters, seeds, deli meat, hummus, beans, tuna, nuts (if the school allows), tofu or edamame.

**GRAINS:** whole grain bread, rolls, pita pockets, tortillas, English muffin, mini-bagel, cereal, rice pasta, popcorn, pretzels, graham crackers, mini-muffins or quinoa.

**VEGETABLES:** carrots, celery, peppers, broccoli, squash, cauliflower, zucchini, salads with leafy greens—and many, many other choices.

**FRUITS:** apple, orange, banana, pear, unsweetened applesauce, grapes, berries, melon balls, all-fruit jam, fruit juice or dried fruit.

**CALCIUM-RICH FOODS OR BEVERAGES:** low-fat milk, soy milk, yogurt, cheese or pudding.

**Resources:** [Florida Blue blog](#), [choosemyplate.gov](#)

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## If Your Child has Food Allergies

Having a child with food allergies can make meals stressful. Here are some tips to help ease the strain.

1. A list of the foods your child can eat will help you look on the bright side.
2. Here's the golden ticket to meal planning success: Take the list of foods your child can eat and create several specific meals from the foods listed.
3. Search out blogs and support groups for food allergies. Most of these blogs and groups are the work of moms who are dealing with the

4. Be a label detective! It's the first line of defense in avoiding foods that may harm your child. Even though the FDA requires major food allergens be listed on the label, checking it yourself is a good precaution.
5. Carry easy snacks for your kids when you're out to avoid being stuck some place with nothing for them. Consider rice cakes and crackers, or dried fruit.
6. Keep special treats for your kids in the freezer, like an allergy-free dessert for times they're invited to a birthday party. Frozen banana slices and grapes are easy snacks, too.
7. Teachers, sitters and group leaders need to know about your children's allergies. They can be your extra set of eyes when you are not around. Educate them about the signs to look for with a severe reaction and how to use an epinephrine injector.

**Resource:** [webmd.com](http://webmd.com); [mayoclinic.org](http://mayoclinic.org)



## Fresh Fruit with Cinnamon Dip

Vanilla yogurt with cinnamon makes an easy and delicious dip for your favorite fruits. Use low-fat yogurt for an even healthier option.

### Ingredients:

- 1 apple
- 1 orange
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 1 cup vanilla yogurt (low-fat)
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

### Directions

1. Core and slice the apple.
2. Slice banana.
3. Peel and section the orange.
4. Pour the orange juice into a small bowl.
5. Dip the fruit pieces into the

orange juice to prevent browning.

6. Arrange the fruit on a plate.
7. Mix the yogurt and cinnamon in a small bowl.
8. Serve the yogurt-cinnamon mixture as a dip for the fruit.

Recipe courtesy of [whatscooking.fns.usda.gov](http://whatscooking.fns.usda.gov)  
[Click here](#) for nutritional information.

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