

# Back to school: What you need to know about school lunch

By Denver Stay-at-Home Moms Examiner, Eliza Martinez  
August 27, 1:31 PM

It's official: the kids are back in school and fall is on it's way. Many children eat lunch in the cafeteria at



school, but how can you be sure they are getting a balanced meal? In short, you really can't. The health experts have long said that your plate should be filled with fruits and veggies, healthy protein, whole grains and healthy fats. However, from what I've seen, school cafeterias give very little fruits and veggies. Potatoes and ketchup are counted as a vegetable, which is why so many times fries with ketchup are served.

In addition, most schools serve nuggets, corn dogs and high-fat grilled cheese sandwiches. This is partly because kids will eat this stuff and partly because they have to

follow [governmental guidelines](#) while also adhering to a budget. This means that many students must be served a "healthy" lunch with



not enough money to really do it. Fruit often comes in the form of canned peaches and mandarin oranges in heavy syrup and sometimes fresh apples or oranges when they are in season. I know better than anyone else how hard it is to feed a family a healthy diet with only a certain amount of money in which to do it. But, I really feel that school lunches aren't that healthy.

Since the program hasn't been updated in at least a decade there are no allowances for salt and trans fat, which we now know is very bad for you and is found in processed foods, many of which make a regular appearance on the school lunch menu. On the plus side, they do limit fat to 30% of the calories and



saturated fat to 10%.

Copyright © 2009 Clarity Digital Group LLC d/b/a Examiner.com. All Rights reserved.

Advertisement

Groupsite.com Make things happen NOW



Here are some simple solutions: Pack your child's lunch. I know this takes time, but it saves money and ensures that they have some healthy fare that they will actually eat. I mean, how many kids like canned fruit cocktail? I usually allow my son to choose one lunch per week that he will eat in the cafeteria and he brings his lunch the rest of the week. This way he eats healthy most of the time, but still gets the experience of eating in the lunch line too.

Also, you can talk to your school lunch coordinator with any ideas you have. Maybe, parents can take turns donating fresh fruits and vegetables if they can afford to. The problem is that you can't squeeze more money out of the program so schools are forced to buy and serve what they can, while still meeting the guidelines. It is a problem that will probably go on until the end of time.

[Action for Healthy Kids](#) can help - here you can join other parents in the fight to improve school lunches as well as get ideas of how to get started.

Whatever happens, you should be able to relax and know that your kid's are eating healthy while they are at school. Starting at home, by modeling good eating habits can help because then kids see what a healthy diet is and know that dessert and treats are sometimes foods, and not something they need at every meal. One or two hot lunches a week aren't

going to ruin your child as long as their eating habits the rest of the time are healthy and balanced.

Source: [Parenting magazine](#)

More information and tips:

[betterschoolfood.org](#),  
[healthyschoolscampaign.org](#), and  
[eatwellandkeepmoving.org](#).



**Denver Stay-at-Home Moms Examiner**

Eliza Martinez

To see more, visit us at [examiner.com](#).

Copyright © 2009 Clarity Digital Group LLC d/b/a Examiner.com. All Rights reserved.

Advertisement

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™