

Pointers for Parents

Healthy Lunch Box Makeovers

(NAPSA)—When preparing packed lunches for school-age children, don't forget the essential whole grains, protein, fiber and nutrients. If this seems like a lot to fit in a brown sack, think again, says Target health and nutrition expert, Dr. Susan Mitchell. The nationally recognized authority on nutrition says it's easy to integrate sound eating into busy lifestyles—any parent can provide wholesome lunch options for children at affordable prices.

A child's lunch should re-energize the body and fuel the mind. Whole grains, lean protein, fruit, vegetables and fortified foods that are low in fat will make kids feel revived and ready to pay attention in classes, says Dr. Mitchell. She recommends these top lunch box tips:

- Whole grains are packed with fiber, vitamins and minerals; therefore, it is important to incorporate a whole grain selection of pitas, minibagels, tortillas and bread for sandwiches. You can also use a cookie cutter for bread to create fun shapes.

- Sneak in extra nutrition by adding shredded carrots or chopped vegetables to egg, chicken or tuna salad. Add some extra crunch to sandwiches with thin-sliced layers of green peppers or cucumbers.

- Pack baby carrots or small pieces of broccoli or cauliflower with hummus for dipping.

- Weave extra vitamins and minerals into a child's diet and include a small bottle of fortified water in addition to milk or soymilk.

- Mix it up. To help children look forward to what's in their lunch box, vary the items. Alter-



nate sending baked chips with black bean dip or low-fat popcorn, which is a source of whole grain. Parents can also add a granola bar or try an Archer Farms Strawberry Fruit Bar, which provides 100 percent of the daily value for vitamin C and is a great source of fiber. The Target exclusive Archer Farms collection offers premium-quality foods at great value, including all-natural and organic options. All the products also contain zero grams of added trans fat.

- Send sandwich alternatives such as string cheese, rolled lean meat or cheese with honey mustard dressing or salsa as a dip. For a special snack, include a trail mix packed with nuts, seeds and dried fruit, such as Archer Farms Sunny Cranberry Trail Mix. Nuts are packed with protein, fiber, magnesium and other nutrients, while dried fruit satisfies a child's sweet tooth. If a child is allergic to nuts but tolerates soy, use soynuts and soynut butter.

Packing a nutritious lunch does require some thought, but with just a little planning on your part, your children will have a healthy lunch that will keep them energized throughout the entire school day.