

# Packing the perfect school lunch

Give your child variety. No one likes to eat the same meal everyday. Keep it exciting and mix it up. If your children's school allows students to heat up their lunches, do not forget to utilize any yummy leftovers.

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Packing lunch for school going children has been a common practice in Uganda. Whether to pack lunch for your child or let them eat one at school is a matter of debate. Some parents say they prefer their children eating school food while others would want to prepare their children's food themselves. Shakilah Katuutu, a parent notes of how most schools do not mind about diet and will feed children on any type of food they come across without thinking about the nutrition part of it.

Giving a child money to buy food at school is less tiresome and simple but has significant effects on a child's diet as they will always opt for snacks. Katuutu notes that a parent knows what is best for their children and that is what they will pack for them.

"Most school canteens will not mind about diet and all they will prepare are things children like, such as fries, chicken among others. They won't even put a simple vegetable because they know children hate them," she adds. To Katutu, homemade food creates a strong bond between a parent and child

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THE NUMBER OF  
VEGETABLE SERVINGS  
RECOMMENDED PER DAY

hence creating long lasting memories.

### The kind of foods to give

Lilian Nakayiki Nyanzi a nutritionist at Neulife Medical Centre, Bweyogerere, notes that foods rich in Omega 3 fatty acids are essential body fats that are found in fish products and avocado as well. They are healthier fatty acids required by the body for brain functioning, retaining moisture and strengthening the skin barriers. They are healthier for the heart too.

She adds that parents should feed their child on plenty of nuts such as ground nuts, simsim, coconuts, and all other types of nuts because they are healthier food options. They contain Vitamin E which protects

the skin from Oxidative cell damage by fighting against free radicals (cancerous particles) that may accumulate in the body.

"Feed them on fresh fruits, fresh fruit juices and green leafy vegetables; one should eat at least 3 fruit servings per day or even drink fresh fruit juices to ensure that they obtain the nutritional benefits in the fruits," Nyanzi says. Fruits contain a variety of vitamins relevant for a healthy body. Such vitamins include; Vitamin C, E, A. Vitamin C is necessary for the regular manufacturing and repairing of tissue cells as well as aiding in the production of the

collagen protein. Collagen protein is necessary for the development of the body tissue cells.

Gorret Betty Mbabazi, a Nurse with God's Mercy Clinic in Kampala recommends calcium-rich food for bone development such as yoghurt, seeds, cheese, beans, among others.

Mbabazi also recommends that parents encourage their children to drink plenty of water by packing it for them. Six- 8 glasses of water per day is what is recommended for a normal human being but you can pack for them two to three cups. She adds water helps rehydrate the body and prevents dehydration especially

