



***The Lunchbox Nutritionist***  
***Kathleen Searles MS, RD, LDN***



Hello! This month I want to focus on Lunchbox Nutritionist basics and talk about some tips for healthy packed lunches. You may be thinking that you want to have healthy lunches for yourself and your family, but get stuck for ideas and time. I hope this issue will spark some ideas to make healthy lunches feel easier and more fun!

**- Kathleen Searles, MS, RD, CSSD, LDN**

### **Lunchbox Nutritionist Basics:**

**Why is a good lunch important?** Lunch is important because it provides fuel for your daily activities at work or school. Studies (primarily on breakfast) have shown that people who keep well-fueled show improved attention, focus, creativity, memory, and test-taking skills. These are all things that we want to bring to our job or classroom! In my practice I see many women who skimp on lunch, and this sets them up for over-eating during the day.

Help yourself by planning ahead. Keep basic supplies for assembling lunches on hand so you don't have to scramble in the morning. Suggestions include:

- An insulated lunch bag for each person

- Freezer gels and thermoses
- Various sized bags and containers for food
- Eating utensils
- Napkins and/or disposable wipes
- You may prefer to use reusable items rather than disposables. One website with a variety of options is [www.reuseit.com](http://www.reuseit.com).



- Assemble your lunch with a variety of healthy, well-liked foods. You can make interesting lunches by including something for energy, something to help you stay full, and something that's fun. Foods for energy are carbohydrates like breads, crackers, fruit, and vegetables. Take advantage of lunch to increase family members' intake of fruits and vegetables! Protein foods like nut butters, meats, tuna, egg, chicken, and cheese help you feel full longer. Examples of typical lunch foods that include carbohydrate plus protein are a sandwich, a salad with added protein, leftovers, or hearty soup.

- "Fun" in a lunch can come from favorite foods, traditional treats, unusual preparation, or even a note from home! For example, in this season you can cut bread into a pumpkin shape with a cookie cutter. Add some peanut butter and jelly (or pumpkin butter!) and you will have a seasonal mini-sandwich! If you like something crunchy for lunch you can use mini-rice cakes or popcorn in place of traditional snack chips. If you like sweet treats, pack a small cookie or a few chocolate chips along with fruit for dessert. Small containers of yogurt can also double as dessert.
- Keep it simple with ready to use items. You can keep packed lunches simple by looking for individually packaged foods to toss into your lunch box. Some examples are cheese sticks, applesauce or fruit cups, individual containers of cottage cheese or yogurt, single serve packs of almonds or peanut butter, or single serving hummus cups. Baby carrots, grapes, cherry or grape tomatoes, apples and bananas are examples of ready to use minimally processed foods.
- You can do it! By keeping the needed supplies on hand, planning ahead, and using your creativity you can keep your lunch routine from getting stale. I hope that you will challenge yourself to eat better than ever by packing some great lunches!



## Recipe of the Month: Autumn Cheese Spread

¼ cup shredded Cabot 50% reduced fat cheese  
 6 red seedless grapes, cut into quarters  
 1 tbsp. sliced toasted almonds  
 1 tbsp. Miracle Whip (or your favorite mayonnaise)

Combine ingredients. Serve on a whole wheat pita (1 small or ½ large) with some crispy Romaine lettuce. Serves 1.

## News and Events:

Contact me today to create customized ideas to keep your family healthy with high quality lunches. Give me a call today (978-697-2834) or send an e-mail ([ksearles@lunchbox-nutritionist.com](mailto:ksearles@lunchbox-nutritionist.com)) for more information!

## Make Standout

**Sandwiches.** Sometimes we get tired of the same old sandwich.

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## Quote of the Month:

"Develop an attitude of gratitude, and give thanks for everything that happens to you, knowing that every step forward is a step toward achieving something bigger and better than your current situation."

- Brian Tracy

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Here are some ideas to get you thinking about new approaches to sandwiches.

- Use various whole grain breads – sliced, pitas, wraps, tortillas, or crackers
- Turn leftovers into sandwiches. For example, an extra chicken breast can become a sliced chicken sandwich or the base for a tasty chicken salad.
- Consider plant based sandwiches like peanut butter, sunflower nut butter, almond butter, hummus, or spreads/fillings made from beans or lentils
- Instead of mayonnaise try hummus, guacamole, sliced avocado, pesto cranberry sauce, or flavored mustard
- Add lots of vegetables to your sandwiches. Try sliced radishes, shredded carrots, or some cucumber.

### Food Safety Tips for Lunches

- Wash lunch boxes and containers daily.
- Keep hot foods hot (thermoses) and cold foods cold (freezer gels or frozen juice boxes)
- Wash your hands before eating lunch



### About Kathleen Searles, MS, RD, LDN

I am a Registered Dietitian and am licensed to practice in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine. The exciting field of nutrition has been my passion ever since I took a foods class with my friends in high school.

Through my work in different states and different settings I have developed my philosophy of helping people improve their diets by finding foods that fit into their particular routines, budgets, and preferences. I look forward to helping you solve your nutrition challenges with tasty and satisfying foods.

