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Are packed lunches healthier than school lunches?

by Yona Gavino

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Health officials say the healthiest choice is to pack a lunch from home

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ESCANABA--

School is back in session, and it's important for kids to make healthy food choices even when parents aren't around. And whether kids bring a lunch from home or eat a school-provided one, there are ways to make the most nutritious choice.



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 18 percent of teens, 12 to 19 years old, are obese, and 20 percent of kids ages 6 to 11 years old are obese.

How can kids make healthy food choices if they opt for a school-provided lunch?

"Well, definitely if they could limit the amount of fried foods or high sugar foods," explains Public Health Clinic dietician, Casey Young. "They should limit things like cookies and the cupcakes, that kind of thing."

Young said the best choice is to bring a lunch from home.

Parents can have a conversation about healthy eating habits with kids as young as four years old. If you do pack a lunch, try to include a wheat sandwich, water, and of course, fruits or veggies. Parents can also help promote good eating habits by getting kids involved in grocery shopping and having regular family meals.

"Teachers appreciate it when they know the kids have had a good, balanced meal at home. They do appear to have more energy," Young said.

But what do kids think about healthy food choices?

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A D V E R T I

"If you're sick, if you eat a lot of fruit, you won't be sick anymore," explains first grader Cole Reese.

Some of the first graders at the Delta County YMCA explained why they like drinking milk.

"I want to be taller than my daddy," explains first grader Cassidy LaBay. "He's short."

The calcium is important for bone growth. And the vitamins, minerals and nutrients from a good lunch will help promote learning all year-round.

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CJ said: **Wednesday, September 14, 2011**

Quit eating out of a box and everyone would be healthier!

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marquette_wayne said: **Tuesday, September 13, 2011**

Cheaper, too.

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BigPines said: **Tuesday, September 13, 2011**

It all depends on the attitude of the parents who pack the lunch. They can think and pack something good tasting and nutritious for the kid, or just throw in a bag of chips, can of pop and a twinkie. And, who's teaching that 1st grade gal that if she drinks milk she'll end up taller than her short dad?

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Local Mom said: **Tuesday, September 13, 2011**

I agree there should be healthy choices, but our local schools did a "health food" push at the request of a picky student (who brought her lunch anyway, after changes were implemented). The options were not palatable, and it drove more kids to the ala carte and junk food. Health food does not have to equate to "yucky," but with the tiny amount of money the districts have for lunches, it seems a shame to waste it on food kids won't eat.

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media watch said: **Tuesday, September 13, 2011**

All I remember about my packed lunches was bologna sandwiches, and I loved every bite of them.

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aquafria said: **Tuesday, September 13, 2011**

My daughter prefers a packed lunch over most of the school's menu selections.

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shampoo said: **Tuesday, September 13, 2011**

If the school offers a "healthy" lunch and parents pack a "healthy" lunch then ...no problem...the choice of course is always whatever the Parents think is best for their child. If "sugar" foods are offered then of course the child will choose that and dump the rest.

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UPUPUP said: **Monday, September 12, 2011**

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It depends on the District it seems

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