

Getting Ready for Kindergarten Lunchtime

Are you wondering what you can do to get your preschooler ready for lunch time in the school cafeteria?

Teach your child how to open and close a lunchbox, open those difficult little straws in the juice boxes, zip lock bags and other containers. Practice at home and they can practice at preschool too.

Start exposing your child to some of the cafeteria foods/cold lunches from home. Check out your school district's website lunch menu for ideas. Let your child explore the food and see you and family members eating it. During a scheduled snacktime, you can encourage your child to touch, smell, lick and bite the food. He can spit it out if he doesn't like it. Try not to use words like "it's yummy", "just try it", "just take one bite". Use words to describe the foods (cheese-"it's soft", "it's yellow").

Start sending in your child's preferred lunches to school every day as well as a small amount of the food you would like to work on for kindergarten. Don't stop providing the food if your child chooses not to eat it. Exposure is the key, so keep presenting it over time. Rotate the foods that you would like him to eat.

Check out Pinterest for lunchtime ideas for picky eaters...you'll find good ideas on how to pack the food and snacks that will be more appealing to your child (Bento boxes, using cupcake liners, etc).

Have your child participate by helping pack their lunch.



Here are some kindergarten lunch ideas:

- using a thermos- mac and cheese, soup, pasta, meatballs (if using a thermos, have your child practice eating out of the thermos)
- a small tupperware with paper cupcake liners. This helps with variety and portion control and keeps different foods from touching and makes it fun!
- breakfast for lunch-milk and cereal, cold waffles, bacon or sausage
- rolled up deli meats, cheese and crackers
- if you are trying to increase fruit consumption, try freeze dried apples, strawberries or bananas as a start
- cookie cutter sandwiches-nutella, sun butter, cream cheese & jelly, hummus, butter, cheese, cold cuts

Remember, kids' lunches don't always have to be "traditional" lunches. Be creative and keep trying!

Talk to your child's speech therapist about food goals and see how they can help you food chain to get to the goal.