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MAKE LUNCH TIME, FUN TIME
Jodie Shield, R.D., Provides Creative and Tasty Ways to Kick the Brownbag Blues

According to Jodie Shield, M.Ed., RD, and author of the *American Dietetic Association's Guide to Healthy Eating For Kids* (John Wiley and Sons, 2002), the grade school years are an important time for children to develop healthy eating habits.

However, as many parents know, getting their kids to eat a healthier diet can be a challenge; many kids end up throwing away their healthy lunch, opting for less nutritious foods and beverages from school vending machines. To help banish the brownbag blues, Jodie has developed the following tips on ways parents can best enhance their child's diet, while keeping brownbag boredom at bay:

- **Sit down once a week and plan lunches together.** Then let your child pack his/her own lunch. By taking part in the planning process, your child will have a vested interest in his/her lunch and as a result, be more likely to eat it.

- **Celebrate special occasions.** Plan lunch menus around special events. For example, on Valentine's Day, pack all red and pink products such as apples, red grapes and strawberry milk or throw in a fortune cookie to mark the Chinese New Year.

- **Try new food products.** Encourage your children to try new things. Spice up their lunches with exotic fruits like kiwi or a new food that they've seen advertised on television.

- **If you have younger kids, make your own happy meals.** Include a joke, sticker or personal note as a special surprise.

- **Send favorite foods.** If there are certain healthy foods your child likes, such as grapes, pretzels or yogurt, feel free to pack them. You also can send healthy leftovers like chicken or single-servings of cereal.

- **Bypass beverage boredom.** Add a little color to your kids' lunchbox by packing one of the fun, new flavored milks like cookies and cream or chocolate malt, which contain the same nine essential nutrients as white milk but in the flavors kids crave. And, many are available in single-serve packaging making them easy for kids to grab-and-go.

- **Pack extra to share with friends.** If you want your child to try something new, like celery stuffed with peanut butter and raisins, work the power of peer pressure to your advantage by packing extra for the other kids to taste.

- **Give them a treat.** It's okay to include items like cookies, or candy in your child's lunch every so often as long as you only pack a small amount.

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