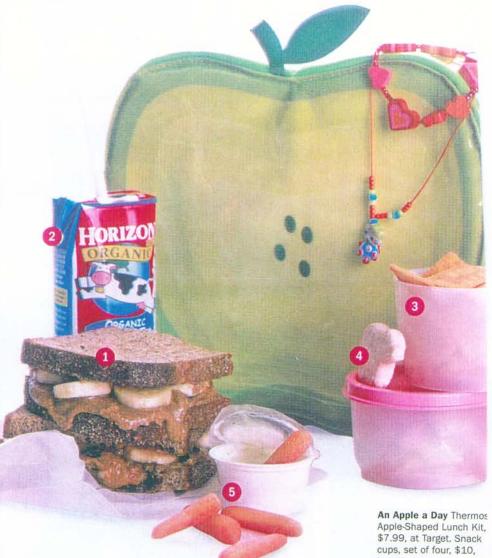
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A Healthier Lunch Box

This semester send your kids—and yourself—off with a nutritious and tasty midday meal. By Daryn Eller

6 Healthy-**Lunch Hints**

MIX COLORS, Green, blue-purple, yellow-orange, and red: Fruits and vegetables in different color groups have different disease fighting compounds, says Cynthia Sass, RD, of the American Dietetic Association. Pack a variety and you'll expand your lunch's range of vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals. A mix of protein, carbohydrates, and fats gives you nutrients for health and energy.

BIGGER ISN'T BETTER. Think about portion sizes and bulk, especially for young children, who have small stomachs. Although whole grains are good, packing super-high-fiber foods, such as bran muffins or cereals with extra fiber, may cause kids to get too full before they've had a chance to take in adequate nutrition.

MAKE IT EASY. Will your pre-schooler be likely to peel an orange? Will a middle-schooler go to the trouble of mixing fruit into his yogurt? Provide choices such as grapes, berries, sectioned oranges, or cut-up melon that are as uncomplicated as possible.

LET YOUR KIDS CHOOSE

STOW SNACKS, David L. Katz, MD. founder and director of the Prevention Research Center at Yale Medical School, always carries something for between meals. "I consider it the nutritional equivalent of an umbrella," says Katz, a father of five. "An umbrella pro-tects us from foul weather; the snack pack protects us from foul nutrition." Try nonfat yogurt, sevengrain crackers, cereal, dried fruit, or fresh fruit and vegetables.