



**How Nutritious Are Children's Packed School Lunches? A Comparison of Lunches Brought From Home and School Lunches**

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**ABSTRACT**

Through reinforcement of policies and nutrition standards linked to the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), school environments play an important role in preventing childhood obesity. The NSLP includes mandated nutrition standards that specify recommended servings of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, dairy and protein, as well as limits on calories, saturated fat, trans fat and sodium. Packed lunches students bring from home are not required to meet nutrition standards and often fail to reach the nutrient quality of lunches provided by the NSLP. Students' packed lunches are frequently high in calories provided by desserts, snack foods and sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) and often deficient in fruits and vegetables. In this review, authors summarize recent research and discuss the food and nutrient content of students' packed lunches compared to NSLP student lunches, focusing on both the School Meals Initiative standards and the 2012 nutrition standards.

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