



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
August 3, 2006



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## **Countdown to Kindergarten Tip: Packing Healthy School Lunches**

**Columbia, S.C.** – Children's physical and mental health is an important determinant of their readiness for school. Good nutrition helps give children the energy they need to be better learner and perform well in school. Charleston wellness and nutrition expert, Dr. Ann Kulze shows how you can make a healthy lunch for you child by providing foods in four essential categories: protein, produce, calcium, and fun foods. Here are Dr. Ann's top picks within these categories:

### **1. A Healthy Protein Package**

- Sandwiches made with deli turkey, ham, chicken, or roast beef, egg salad from omega-3 eggs, tuna salad, and peanut butter or other nut butters and spreadable fruit.
- Always use 100% whole grain breads, and make things more interesting by substituting whole grain tortillas, bagels, pitas, or English muffins.
- Add veggies – lettuce, tomatoes, onions, pickles, sprouts, etc. where possible.

### **2. Produce**

- Remember the deeper the color, the more health-boosting power it has.
- There are loads of kid-friendly veggies that are perfect for school lunches, including baby carrots, celery sticks, sweet bell pepper strips, cherry tomatoes, and broccoli florets.
- Kids love dips – include a small container of hummus or low-fat salad dressing for their dipping pleasure!
- Any fruit is fine, but the superstars are ideal, including berries, cherries, plums, any whole citrus, mangoes, kiwi, apples, cantaloupes, and red grapes. Whole fruits frequently end up in the trash can. Learn to cut them up and present them in fun containers or in other exciting ways. Always cut up apples, pears, oranges, etc. Squirt a bit of lemon juice over them to keep them fresh and crisp.

### **3. A Calcium-Rich Food**

- Cheese – avoid full-fat varieties. You can now find an array of reduced-fat cheeses on the grocery shelf, including 2% cheddar cheese in cubes, sticks, or other fun shapes, mozzarella cheese sticks, and 2% milk American cheese.
- Low-fat yogurt in spoonable, drinkable or squeezable containers.
- 2% or skim milk, or calcium-fortified soy milk.
- Calcium-fortified 100% orange juice.

### **4. Fun Foods**

- A small piece of dark chocolate, like Dove Dark.
- A small bag of trail mix, a granola bar, a small box of raisins or other dried fruit, a container of their favorite healthy, dry cereal, 100% fruit sticks, baked chips, a small bag of goldfish, etc.

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*Dr. Ann is nationally recognized expert in wellness and nutrition. In addition to her private wellness practice, Just Wellness, she provides corporate wellness consulting, and is the author of Dr. Ann's 10-Step Diet, A Simple Plan for Permanent Weight Loss and Lifelong Vitality. Prior to founding Just Wellness in 2002, Dr. Ann was a family physician in Charleston for 14 years. For more information, go to: [www.dranns10steps.com](http://www.dranns10steps.com).*

*S.C. First Steps to School Readiness is a comprehensive statewide education initiative to help prepare children to reach school healthy and ready to succeed. Along with partners EdVenture Children's Museum and Voices for South Carolina's Children, First Steps designed the Countdown program to help prepare S.C.'s most at-risk children into kindergarten, to target early parent involvement and increase community awareness of the importance of school readiness.*

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