

## **Choose Healthy School Lunches! – Fall 2007**

Do you know what your child is eating at school for lunch? Buying lunch at school gives children power over what they eat, without parents making the choices for them. Fortunately, school lunches have improved over the years, but many still exceed the recommendations for fat. While the typical school lunch usually meets standards for protein, vitamins, calcium and iron, many schools offer high fat a la carte items such as french fries and chips, as well as high sugar items like flavored drinks, cupcakes, ice cream etc. We recommend parents talk with their children about making healthy choices at lunch. Here are some tips to help your child to choose healthy school lunches:

- Look over the school lunch menu with your child, encouraging him to choose meals that include fruit, vegetables, lean meats, whole grains and milk or water to drink.
- Find out whether your school cafeteria offers a la carte items such as french fries, chips, soda and ice cream. Make an agreement with your child that he or she may buy these “special treats” only once or twice a week. Many schools allow parents to place restrictions on their student’s lunch account to limit a la carte purchases.
- Encourage your child to pack a lunch when practical, especially on days when the main lunch choice is less healthy. For packed lunches choose low fat meats, whole grain breads, lettuce and light mayonnaise or mustard on sandwiches. Be sure to include fresh fruit and raw veggies for a snack. Other healthy snacks include lowfat yogurt or pudding, trail mix, pretzels, graham or whole grain crackers and lowfat/reduced sugar granola bars.