

Nutritionists offer tips for kids' snacks, lunches

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University of Maine nutritionists are available to offer advice for parents and guardians looking to pack healthy -- and appealing -- lunchboxes for children and adolescents, and to identify the benefits of school-prepared meals and snacks.

Mary Ellen Camire, a fellow of the Institute of Food Technologists and professor of [food science](#) and human nutrition, is an expert on the [health benefits](#) of [dietary supplements](#), foods and [food components](#), in addition to the prevention and amelioration of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

She suggests considering several types of immune system-boosting foods to help kids ward off colds and viruses.

“Vitamin A helps the immune system, so yams, carrots, spinach, mangoes and vitamin A-fortified foods like milk could be served,” Camire says. “Emerging research indicates that red, purple and blue fruits and vegetables including our own blueberries, red grapes, strawberries and cranberries also protect against infections.”

Foods that contain probiotics also can boost the immune system, so yogurt smoothies with blueberries can help boost health and nutrition in several ways, she adds.

Kate Yerxa, University of Maine Cooperative Extension statewide educator for nutrition and physical activity, also can discuss healthy

snacks and lunches packed from home or the benefits of school meals and snack programs, in addition to ideas to help keep kids motivated and moving when they're not at their desks.

Yerxa notes that the proliferation of school gardens has helped educate students about proper nutrition and the types of fruits and vegetables that provide it. She adds that the new Farm to School initiative also is helping.

Provided by University of Maine

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