

STAYING HEALTHY ON THE MOVE

Eating well while on the road:
a naturopathic perspective

by **stephanie peltz, nd**

Photo: I am Kulz / shutterstock.com

As a parent and naturopathic doctor, I am always conscious of what goes into my child's mouth. It can be tricky to balance busy schedules, picky tastes, health, budget, environmental consciousness, and more. On top of all this – which is already more than enough! – we are bombarded with continuously evolving nutritional information. Most of the time I find a way through the haze, although it is always a work in progress. That being said, when do things get most interesting? When we are out of our natural habitat: when we are traveling.

This summer is likely to be full of changes to your everyday routine. Whether you are taking more picnics, traveling by air/ferry/car, or camping, there will likely be added challenges to your eating routines. Since I became a parent, I have tried to minimize my dependence on what's available at terminals, coffee shops, and fast food rest stops for meals on the go. I assure you, with a little planning and organization, you can continue to feed yourself and your family green, tasty, and nutritious foods while on the road. Here are some of my time-honoured tricks of the trade:

Be prepared

It is worthwhile to plan your travel meals and snacks in advance. Consider where you are going, travel time involved, and how to maintain balance. The key is to keep blood sugar stable in order to avoid big swings in mood and energy levels. Do so by eating regularly, and including protein and healthy fats along the way. Standard travel fare is notoriously full of simple carbohydrates and sugar, and when

consumed can lead to spikes in blood sugar and then an inevitable crash (which is especially tricky when confined to small spaces like planes/cars). Also pay attention to how long foods can be without refrigeration (or consider coolers), and how they maintain texture with time. I have chatted with several parents about their children's aversions to texture, so keep this in mind. For instance: instead of mixing chopped fruit into yogurt and granola in advance, pack them separately, and mix just before eating. Remember, once this planning phase is done, your travel time will be that much smoother and enjoyable with more time left for holiday fun (and less time melting down)!

Pack well

Acquire a variety of leak-proof, reusable containers in various shapes and sizes. This is important to address your environmental impact first and foremost. Also, by choosing glass, stainless steel, silicone, or cloth, your child's exposure to hormone disrupting chemicals (found predominantly in plastics) will be decreased. These containers can be used throughout the trip for packing up leftovers, or as impromptu sand toys! Depending on the type of travel, take into account any weight concerns (i.e. mason jars for car rides/car camping, and nesting stainless steel containers for air travel). How many of you have children who like things separated so various foods don't touch? No problem! Choose separated compartment style containers in these cases. These containers will be a great investment for all kinds of trips/lunches down the line.



Photo: JeniFoto / shutterstock.com

Hydration, hydration, hydration!

Be sure to think of fluids as well as foods. Did you know that a 5% decrease in hydration can lead to a 25% decrease in energy? Tired, cranky travelers aren't a whole lot of fun, so keep the fluids coming. This can be tricky on the plane, so my rule of thumb is to travel with empty reusable water bottles, and fill up either before boarding, or the first time water is offered. We can then take sips at our own convenience. Avoid sweet drinks as they wreak havoc on blood sugar regulation and mood.

Start cooking, baking, cutting, slicing, and prepping away!

And one last pro tip: always pack a little extra. This is in case of unforeseen delays, to share with other curious kids, or to cope with little campers with bigger appetites from all that fresh air! And of course, don't neglect yourselves. When we grown ups are well nourished we are so much more fun to be around just like the wee ones we care for.

The benefits of healthy dining and snacking while traveling are pervasive. It is waste free, budget conscious, and nutritious. It allows you to avoid being restricted by what's available, lets you count on fewer unpleasant behavioural changes from your kids, and of course addresses any special dietary concerns. Happy prepping and bon voyage! •

A LITTLE INSPIRATION

FOR AIRPLANES:

1. Nut/seed butter & bread or crackers (pay attention to texture!)
2. Raw cut up veggies and fruit
3. Sliced organic meat individually rolled
4. Maple smoked sockeye salmon
5. Sliced firm avocado
6. Raw nuts and seeds
7. Homemade healthy muffins, loaves & bars

FOR ROAD TRIPS:

1. Any options for airplanes
2. Yogurt, granola and chia or hemp hearts
3. Protein smoothies
4. Overnight oats
5. Dried fruit
6. Tortilla chips with guacamole
7. Bean dips with crackers & raw veggies

FOR CAMPING TRIPS:

Many of these are in part or in full made ahead; refer to Dr. Heidi Lescanec's recipes for inspiration.

1. Any of the above options for airplanes & car rides
2. Quinoa porridge
3. Curry / dhal
4. Polenta lasagna
5. Kale chips (wonderfully messy – so great to eat outside!)
6. Natural hormone free sausages
7. Date pie