

Pack a Backyard Picnic

Overview

What's better than sharing meals with your family? Sharing meals with your family via picnic! Picnicking is an easy, accessible way to shake up the day to day routine and offer a new space for self-reflection and enable communication. Family meals can serve as a safe space for children and adults to share their thoughts and feelings and talk about events and observations in their daily lives. Establishing these open lines of communication at the dinner table help to foster children's confidence and ability to communicate their thoughts and feelings. The best part about picnics? They can happen year-round, indoor or out, with just a little creative thinking!

Take Action

Pick a Safe Location

You don't have to travel far to have a great picnic! As long as there is room to sit, relax, and play, you can picnic almost anywhere! If the weather permits, opt to picnic in your backyard, walk or bike to a neighborhood park, or even your driveway. If the weather has you stuck inside, have your picnic on the living room or kitchen floor.

The most important thing to remember when choosing a location to picnic is to choose a safe space. If you are traveling to a nearby park, make sure children are accompanied by an adult and take a well-known and safe route (also an opportunity to talk with children about walk or bike safety). Be mindful of your surroundings and choose a space that is clear of foot traffic and a safe distance away from any roads.

Come Prepared

- Whether you picnic outdoors or in your home, treat this "outing" just as you normally would by packing up a picnic basket to make the experience more

memorable. Find a reusable tote, empty box or basket and gather your picnic essentials: Picnic blanket or towel

- Hand sanitizer or wet wipes to keep messes at bay.
- Journal, coloring books and crayons, small games or cards, outdoor toys (e.g. jump rope, soccer ball, bubbles, chalk), etc. to spend some time connecting and playing together as a family.
- Healthy snacks and plenty of water. Some simple picnic favorites:
 - Grapes, apples, oranges, apples
 - Baby carrots
 - Peanut butter & jelly sandwiches
 - Turkey and cheese sandwiches
 - Crackers
 - String Cheese
 - Trail mix
- Sunscreen and/or bug spray if outdoors

Incorporate a Theme

Incorporating a theme into your picnic can be a fun and easy way to shake things up and use the imagination. Imagine you are going on a jungle safari and are camping underneath a rainforest tree. Travel to the bottom of the ocean as mermaids, mermen, and fish! Get creative with the snacks you prepare, the games you pack and maybe even dress in costume for the occasion! The possibilities are endless when you use your imagination!

Tips



The best thing about picnics are that they require little to no equipment and can be hosted from almost anywhere! Eating dinner on the floor of your living room still counts as a picnic and more importantly, provides valuable family time.



Switch up your location if you become a frequent picnicker! Try moving from the back yard to the front or from the living room to the kitchen.



Picnicking can also be a way for parents to socialize with friends while children connect with their friends. Invite children to plan and prepare for their picnic and find a spot where they can picnic nearby to parents and model healthy items to pack.



If picnicking outdoors, take some time to explore nature. Create a scavenger hunt, go for a nature walk or practice mindfulness with a 5-4-3-2-1 activity (5 things you see, 4 things you hear, 3 things you smell, 2 things you feel and 1 thing you taste) and journal or draw what you experience.



Parents, feel free to bring your own adult picnic blanket and snacks to have your own picnic nearby with neighbors and friends.

For more activities and ideas like this one, be sure to [sign up for our news and updates](#). And if you like what you see, please [donate to support our work](#) creating more ways to help build a healthier future for kids.

[The Perfect Backyard Picnic Checklist \(A Healthier Michigan\)](#)

[What to Pack for a Healthy Picnic \(Intermountain Healthcare\)](#)

[Healthy Recipes for a Backyard Picnic \(ThinkHealth\)](#)

Outdoor Exploration Activities

Neighborhood Walk and Bike

Step into the wild! Create space to explore the outdoors or bring nature closer to you.

Activities

Get outside to explore the neighborhood with your neighbors with a weekly/biweekly neighborhood walk or bike ride.

Healthy Snacking at Home

Fuel up with healthy snacks at home and on-the-go.

Easy, On-the-Go Play Activities

Turn travel time—whether on foot or in the car—into playtime using these fun, imaginative activities!