

# back to school IT'S GO TIME

The school year craziness is here! Our stay-healthy-and-sane cheat sheet will help you and the kids ace the basics.

## THE RIGHT GEAR BACKPACK ME UP

Pack and carry smart, and your back, shoulders, and neck will thank you.

### SIZE IT UP

The height of a bag should extend from about 2 inches below the top of your shoulder blades to your waist.

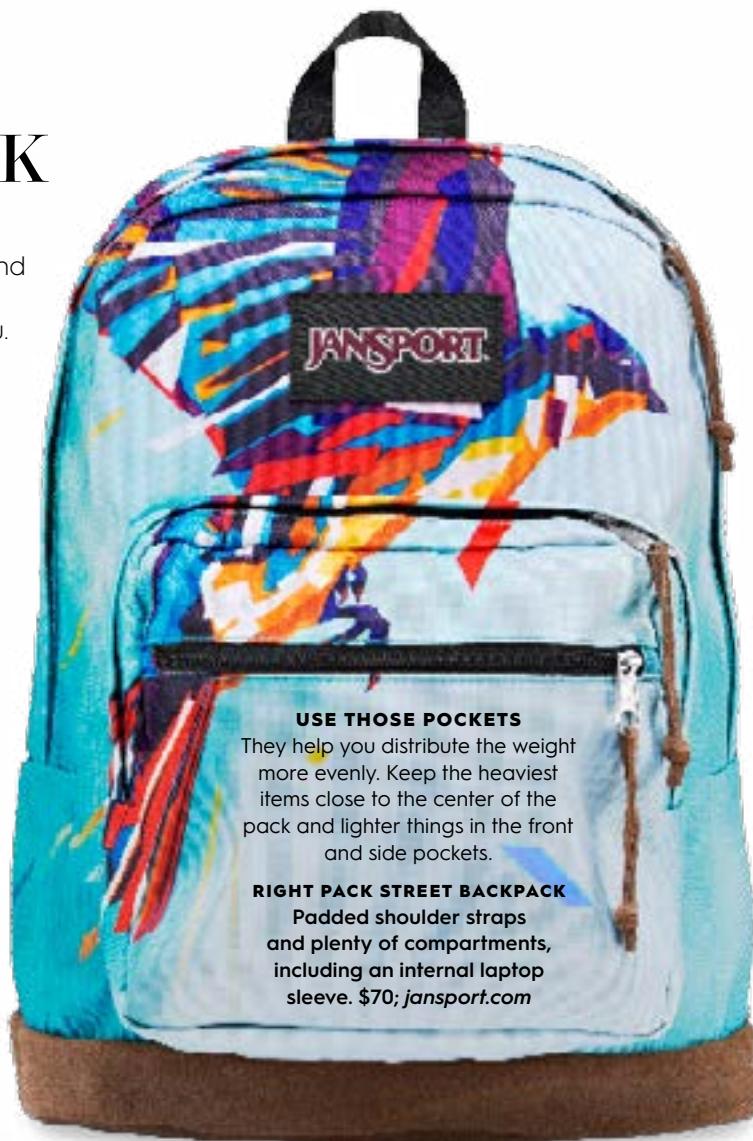
Skip the supersize version—you'll likely overload it.

### STRAP HAPPY

Go with padded straps and tighten them so the bag doesn't sag. This will help you stand upright without straining your neck, shoulders, or back, says Martin Lanoff, M.D., a physiatrist in Vernon Hills, Illinois.

### PUT IT ON RIGHT

Place the backpack on a table or counter, then put it on your back, (don't lift it from the floor). You'll avoid the twisting that can strain your spine.



### USE THOSE POCKETS

They help you distribute the weight more evenly. Keep the heaviest items close to the center of the pack and lighter things in the front and side pockets.

### RIGHT PACK STREET BACKPACK

Padded shoulder straps and plenty of compartments, including an internal laptop sleeve. \$70; [jansport.com](http://jansport.com)

## TOTE IT EASY

If a backpack's not your bag of choice, follow these rules.

1

### Carry it close.

Choose a bag with adjustable straps, and keep them as short as comfortably possible. The further the bag swings away from your center, the more stress it puts on your spine.

2

### Switch off.

Don't always carry the bag on the same side; this stresses your upper back muscles.

3

### Split the load.

Over time, carrying more than 5 pounds for more than 15 minutes on one side can cause shoulder pain, numbness, and tingling in your arm. Consider dividing items between two bags.

—Alyssa Shaffer



### LEAD THE PACK

- 1. TEARDROP BACKPACK** Laptop sleeve, panel for pens, and separate bottom compartment. \$49.95; [llbean.com](http://llbean.com)
- 2. FASHION BACKPACK** Exterior and interior pockets plus suede side panels. \$19.99; [target.com](http://target.com)
- 3. CAMPUS FLAP-OVER BACKPACK** Water-resistant exterior with a drawcord under the rain flap. \$34.99; [landsend.com](http://landsend.com)

SNACK SMART  
**THINK FUEL**

Snacks are the bridges of your diet, giving you energy and brainpower between meals.

Stock up on healthy ingredients so the right stuff is always within reach. Good snacks are around 200 calories each and contain:

**PROTEIN**

Since it's digested slowly, a protein-rich snack gives you a steady stream of energy. Aim for a minimum of 3 to 5 grams of protein per serving.

**FIBER**

Crucial for staving off hunger, fiber helps slow the release of energy you get from carbohydrates. A healthy snack has at least 3 grams per serving.

**GOOD CARBS**

Yes, you need them! Choose whole grains, which also give you the necessary fiber for a gradual and longer-lasting energy boost. Look for *whole grain, whole oats, or whole wheat flour* in the ingredients list. Fruits and vegetables also count as healthy carbs.

**EGG BURRITO**

Place one boiled or scrambled egg, two thin avocado slices, and ¼ cup salsa in an 8-inch whole wheat tortilla.

**EACH SERVING**  
197 cal, 4.3 g fiber, 10.5 g pro.



**SNACK SOLUTIONS**

**What to eat if ...**

■ **DINNER'S NOT UNTIL 8**

**Enjoy a protein-packed appetizer** in the afternoon so you're not famished by mealtime. Try chicken nachos: Sprinkle about eight whole grain pita chips with shredded rotisserie chicken and shredded part-skim mozzarella. Just heat in the oven or microwave.

■ **YOU AND THE KIDS GET HUNGRY ON THE GO**

**Think nuts** for a stick-it-in-your-bag-and-forget-it snack to carry with you at all times. Pick pistachios, which are high in protein, fiber, and antioxidants. "You can have 30 pistachios for about 100 calories, but with most other nuts you only get about half this amount for the same calories," says Lyssie Lakatos, R.D.N., coauthor of *The Nutrition Twins' Veggie Cure*. Also take along small apples for doses of fiber and healthy carbs.

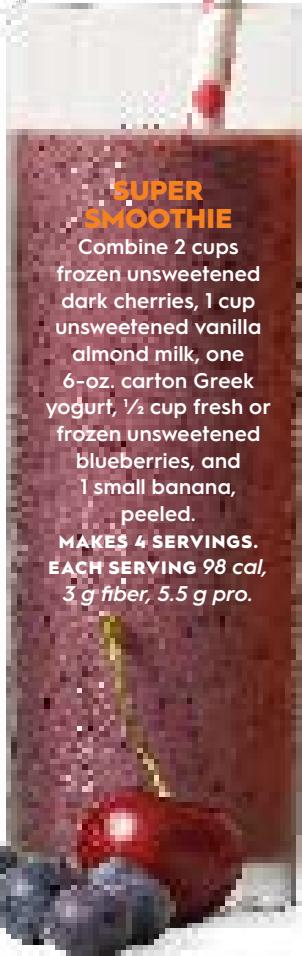
■ **YOU'RE LOW ON FRUITS AND VEGGIES**

**Try a smoothie** instead of juicing. What's the difference? "Juicing leaves out the pulp, which is the good stuff you need," says Keith-Thomas Ayoob, R.D., associate clinical professor of nutrition at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. For a smoothie, you put in the entire fruit or vegetable so you get its full nutritional benefits. Try ½ cup plain regular or fat-free Greek yogurt, 1 cup berries, a few spinach leaves, and one large shredded carrot. For a sweeter drink, blend 1 cup milk, 1 banana, 1 cup strawberries, and ½ Tbsp. unsweetened cocoa powder.

■ **A BIG NIGHT OF STUDYING OR WORK IS AHEAD**

**Make a mini egg burrito** with one egg, avocado, pico de gallo (or salsa), and a small whole wheat tortilla. "Egg yolks have lutein, an antioxidant that gives you a brain boost," says Jackie Newgent, R.D.N., author of *The All-Natural Diabetes Cookbook*. "In adults, higher amounts of lutein have been linked to increased mental sharpness, and in school-age kids, a lutein-rich diet may help them perform better on standardized tests."

PS: One-fourth cup of salsa counts as half of a vegetable serving. We'll take all we can get! —Barbara Brody



**SUPER SMOOTHIE**

Combine 2 cups frozen unsweetened dark cherries, 1 cup unsweetened vanilla almond milk, one 6-oz. carton Greek yogurt, ½ cup fresh or frozen unsweetened blueberries, and 1 small banana, peeled.

**MAKES 4 SERVINGS.**  
**EACH SERVING** 98 cal, 3 g fiber, 5.5 g pro.

**SNACKS WE LOVE**

Move over, chips. These packaged snacks are delicious and healthy!

- 1. HALF NAKED POPCORN** Whole grain, high in fiber, and only 120 calories per bag. [goodhealthnaturalproducts.com](http://goodhealthnaturalproducts.com)
- 2. SAFFRON ROAD CRUNCHY CHICKPEAS** Big on crunch, fiber, and protein; they come in chipotle, Korean BBQ, or plain sea salt. [saffronroadfood.com](http://saffronroadfood.com)
- 3. NOURISH SNACKS** Choose from among flavor combos of granola bites, popcorn, and nut mixes created by nutritionist Joy Bauer (so you know they're healthy!). ■

