

Balanced School Day Tips:

- Labelling foods a “Break 1” and “Break 2” may be a helpful reminder for younger children.
- Sandwiches can be cut in half and wrapped separately—one half for each break.
- Foods that are packed in a thermos may be hotter and taste better if they are eaten during the first break.
- Cold foods like juice and yogurt can be semi-frozen to help them stay cold to the second break.

How will I know if my child is getting enough?



You’ll need to ask! A healthy, active child’s appetite is your best guide to how much food to pack. The two mini-meals for each day in this planner are designed to provide about half of the daily energy needs for kids 7-13 years old. Younger children need smaller portion sizes. Since boys need more energy per day than girls, some boys may need more servings of food. If your child tells you he’s still hungry after finishing his mini-meals, pack more whole grain products, and vegetables and fruit. If food is coming home at the end of the day, pack smaller portions.

What’s a serving?

Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide gives details about the serving size and the number of servings to eat from each food group. The serving size of a food is the same for everyone older than two years. The number of servings of food to eat varies depending on age, sex and activity level. Here’s a condensed version of that information to guide you on portions to pack in the mini-meals.



Food Group	Number of servings to pack for the school day	Examples of One Serving
Vegetables and Fruit	2-4	1 medium apple, orange, peach, banana, pear; ½ cup berries; ¼ cup dried fruit (raisins); 20 cherries, grapes; 1 large kiwi; ½ mango, papaya; ½ cup pineapple (1 slice); ½ cup cantaloupe, watermelon; ½ cup applesauce or fruit cup; 1 large carrot; ½ cup broccoli, cauliflower (4 flowerets); 1 medium stalk celery; ½ cup mushrooms; ½ cup/1 medium pepper, 1 cup tossed salad, ½ cup juice
Grain Products	2-3	½ whole grain pita, english muffin, muffin; ½ whole grain bagel; 1 slice whole grain bread; 4-6 whole grain crackers; 1 small roll; 10 saltine crackers; 1 small pancake; ½ cup pasta/noodles/rice
Milk and Alternatives	1-2	1 cup milk, chocolate milk, soy beverage; ¾ cup yogurt, 200 ml yogurt drink; 50 g (one inch cube) cheese (cheddar, mozzarella, feta)
Meat and Alternatives	1/2-1	2 eggs; ¾ cup beans, lentils; ¾ cup hummus; ¼ cup nuts or seeds; 2 Tbsp peanut butter/nut butters; 150 g (¾ cup) tofu; 2½ oz meat eg beef, chicken, low fat/low salt deli meat, turkey, ham, lamb, pork; 2½ oz (½ cup) canned salmon, tuna

One Month of Mini-Meals for the Balanced School Day

Balanced School Day nutrition breaks offer students two breaks during the school day; at least 20 minutes in the morning, and another 20 minutes in the afternoon. This allows children enough time to sit and eat a nutritious mini-meal twice a day.

Children on a balanced school day timetable need the same amount of food during the day as other children do. The only difference is that they get two chances to eat instead of one.



What should I pack in each mini-meal?

Pack nutritious foods from the four food groups in Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. Nutrition breaks are not the time to eat items like chips, candy and pop. Keep in mind that it doesn't matter if your children eat more at the first break and less at the second break or vice versa. It's more important that the foods they eat are healthy and satisfying.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
WEEK 1	First Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> small muffin yogurt applesauce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/2-1 cup dry cereal milk raisins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/2 bagel with cheese orange juice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/2 chicken sandwich milk banana 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/2 english muffin with ham and cheese clementine
	Second Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/2 cheese sandwich broccoli & dip fruit juice oatmeal cookies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 mini pitas with egg salad carrot sticks & dip milk pudding water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/2 bagel with cheese red peppers & dip plum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chicken noodle soup soda crackers yogurt grapes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 slice veggie pizza cucumbers & dip pear chocolate milk
WEEK 2	First Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 blueberry pancakes (yes they'll eat them cold!) orange sections milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tomato soup made with milk whole grain crackers kiwi pieces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/2 ham sandwich applesauce water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> whole grain crackers cheese cubes pineapple chunks water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dry cereal with dried cranberries yogurt
	Second Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pasta salad with mozzarella cheese Peppers & dip juice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> small muffin celery & dip fruit cup milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/2 ham sandwich carrot sticks & dip fig bars milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> split pea soup 1 slice whole wheat bread milk pudding peach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cheese tortilla with salsa dip green grapes animal crackers water
WEEK 3	First Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 graham crackers with cream cheese fruit cup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> muffin banana milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> raisin bread with butter yogurt orange juice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mini pitas with grated cheese kiwi water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pumpkin loaf yogurt tube apple juice
	Second Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/2 roast beef sandwich carrots & dip plum milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bean salad with mini pitas apple date square water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lunch Box Chili ** whole wheat roll pear milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tuna wrap cauliflower & dip peach chocolate milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> macaroni & cheese peppers & dip grapes water
WEEK 4	First Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 slice banana bread dried apricots cheese slice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hot chocolate made with milk 1 slice whole wheat bread with jam banana 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> raisin bread with cheese slice juice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dry cereal peach yogurt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> muffin pear milk
	Second Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> salmon wrap celery sticks & dip applesauce chocolate milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mini pitas with corned beef tossed salad (dressing on the side) milk pudding water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> baked beans with shredded cheese whole wheat bread baby carrots & dip water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hummus pita triangles cucumbers tomato wedges milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cheese cubes ham slices whole grain crackers rice krispie square juice

Note: See the section "What's A Serving?" to know how much food to send. ** See recipe

Tips & Tidbits for Packed Meals

Pack food so it doesn't go bad. Three important steps:

- 1. Be clean.** Clean hands, a clean working area & clean utensils are a must to prepare food that is safe to eat.
- 2. Keep cold foods cold.**
 - Make sandwiches the night before & keep them in the fridge.
 - Pack items like coleslaw, potato salad & bean salad in a thermos.
 - Use an insulated lunch bag.
 - Add frozen juice or milk or an ice pack.
- 3. Keep hot food hot.**
 - Pack hot foods in a thermos. They should be piping hot when packed in the morning.

Best Beverages (pack one for each break)

- Milk (white or chocolate)
- Water
- 100% Fruit Juice

Fruit drinks and punches are mostly sugar & water.

Can convenience foods be nutritious?

Pre-packaged items are often costly and poor nutrition choices. These are sometimes foods and should only be packed one in a while.

To boost the nutritional value of convenience foods:

- Add frozen veggies to canned soups and pastas when heating them to put in the thermos.
- Make creamed soups with milk.
- Supplement packaged lunch items with veggies sticks & fruit juice.

Lunch Box Chili

1 cup (250 ml) cooked rice
 3/4 cup (175 ml) canned kidney beans, rinsed & drained
 1/2 cup (125 ml) frozen corn kernels
 1 medium tomato, chopped
 1/2 green pepper, chopped
 1/4 tsp chili powder

In a microwave-safe container, stir ingredients until combined. Microwave on high, loosely covered, for 2 to 3 minutes or until hot. Spoon into a thermos.

* Adapted from *Great Food Fast, Dietitians of Canada.*

Are cereal bars & granola bars a good choice?

Not always. Some are more like chocolate bars, especially if they're covered in frosting & filled with chocolate chips & marshmallows. Check the ingredient list & look for rolled oats as the first ingredient. Pack them once in a while, not every day.



Make Ahead Tips

- Bake double batches of muffins and freeze the extras to put into meal bags.
- Bake breads & loaves (banana, pumpkin and date are some ideas) then slice, wrap and freeze individually. They can be added frozen to the lunch bag and will thaw by break.
- Make extra pancakes on the weekend and freeze individually on cookie sheets. Wrap in packs of two so they're ready to add to lunch bags.
- When making one-pot dishes like soups, stews and casseroles, make larger batches and freeze individual portions in microwave safe dishes. Thaw individual portions in the fridge over night, reheat to piping hot in the morning and spoon into a thermos for the lunch bag.
- Cut up extra veggies when making stir fry dishes to use for veggies and dip at mini-meals for the next day.
- When cooking pasta or rice, cook extra and freeze it in 1 cup portion sizes. These grains thaw quickly (place in strainer and pour boiling water over) and are handy for making pasta or rice salads in a flash.