

Balanced School Day Lunches

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 my child's lunch?

Pack nutritious foods from each of the food groups in Canada's Food Guide—Vegetables and Fruit, Whole Grains, and Protein Foods. Nutrition breaks are not the time to eat items like chips, candy and pop. Keep in mind that it doesn't matter if your child eats 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.

	Vegetables— Choose 1-2	Fruit— Choose 1-2	Whole Grains— Choose 1-3	Protein Foods— Choose 2-3	Main Item Ideas (Mixed Dishes)
Everyday Choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veggie Sticks and Dip (Broccoli, Celery, Carrots, Cucumber, Cauliflower, Mushrooms, Coloured Peppers) • Carrot and Cucumber Coins • Cherry Tomatoes • Avocado Slices • Tossed Salad • Spinach Salad • Coleslaw • Tomato Wedges • Guacamole Dip • Baby Carrots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banana • Apple • Orange Segments • Mango • Grapes • Pineapple Chunks • Strawberries • Blueberries • Raspberries • Blackberries • Melon Chunks (Honey Dew, Watermelon) • Cantaloupe • Kiwi • Pear • Plum • Peaches • Fruit Salad • Unsweetened Applesauce • Apple slices with cinnamon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bread • Bun • English Muffin • Tortilla/ Wrap • Pita • Bagel • Dry Cereal • Pita Triangles • Plain Rice Cakes • Pancakes • Whole Grain Crackers • Melba Toasts • Pasta • Rice • Oatmeal • Granola • Couscous • Quinoa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hummus Dip • Yogurt • Cheese • Bean Dip • Cottage Cheese • Turkey Fingers & Cranberry Sauce • Trail Mix with a variety of dried fruits and seeds • Boiled Egg • WOW butter • Chicken • Tuna • Roast Beef 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egg Salad Sandwich • Veggie Pizza • Whole Grain Bagel with slices of avocado and cheese • Bean Salad • Meat Sandwich—chicken, roast beef, turkey • **Broccoli Cheese Egg Cups • Pasta Salad with egg, cheese and veggies • Chicken Caesar Salad Wrap • Leftover quesadilla triangles with salsa • Soup—Vegetable, Bean, Chicken Noodle, Tomato • ** Overnight Oats • Apple & Cheese Sandwich • Leftover Chicken stir-fry with rice • Parfait with frozen berries, yogurt and nut-free granola • Couscous salad with peppers, corn, tomatoes and chickpeas • ** Lunchbox Chili • Mango, Lettuce & Chicken Pita • Taco Salad • **Pizza Roll-Up • Raisin Bread topped with slices of apple and cheese
Some- times Choices (1 or 2 times per week max)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit Cup • Dried Fruit (raisins, cranberries, apricots, apples) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole Grain Muffin (Carrot, Banana, Zucchini) • Homemade Granola Bar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk Pudding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mac & Cheese with veggies • Homemade "Lunchables" with crackers, cheese, ham and a veggie

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
S A M P L E W E E K	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicken sandwich with lettuce, tomato and cheese • Cucumbers & dip • Rice cakes • Strawberries • Yogurt • Granola • White milk • Water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole grain bagel with cheese and avocado slices • Bean salad • Pita triangles • Grapes • White milk • Water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egg salad sandwich with lettuce & tomato • Cucumber and carrot coins • Apple slices with cinnamon • Fruit Cup • Cottage Cheese • White milk • Water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veggie pizza • Carrot sticks & dip • Zucchini muffin • Banana • Strawberries • Yogurt • White milk • Water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boiled Egg • Pancakes • Apple • Crackers • Cheese cubes • Ham slices • Cucumbers • 100% juice • Water

** See recipe on last page

Tips & Tidbits for Packed Meals

PACK FOOD SAFELY THREE IMPORTANT STEPS:

1. Be clean.
 - Clean hands, a clean working area and clean utensils are a must to prepare food that is safe to eat.
2. Keep cold foods cold.
 - Make sandwiches the night before and keep them in the fridge.
 - Pack items like coleslaw, potato salad and bean salad in a thermos.
 - Use an insulated lunch bag.
 - Add an ice pack or freeze a yogurt cup or some milk in a container.
3. Keep hot foods hot.
 - Pack hot foods in a thermos. Fill thermos with boiling water and let it sit covered for 5 minutes. Pour out water then add piping hot food.

ARE CEREAL BARS AND GRANOLA BARS A GOOD CHOICE?

Not always. Some are more like chocolate bars, especially if they're covered in frosting and filled with chocolate chips and marshmallows. Check the ingredient list and look for rolled or whole grain oats as the first ingredient. Pack them only once in a while, not every day. Or better yet, make your own at home with dried fruit and seeds, and less added sugar.

CAN PRE-PACKAGED FOODS BE NUTRITIOUS?

Pre-packaged items are often highly processed, costly and poor nutrition choices. These are sometimes foods and should only be packed once in a while and in small portions.

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 and milk.

BEST BEVERAGES (PACK ONE FOR EACH BREAK)

- Water
- White Milk
- Unsweetened Fortified Soy Beverage

Fruit drinks and punches are just sugar and water and should be avoided. Even fruit juice and chocolate milk have too much sugar for every day; they should be occasional i.e. once or twice a week.

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 throughout the week.
- 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.
- Make a little extra at dinner on purpose and use the leftovers for lunches the next day. Pack them up right after eating to save time in the morning.



BALANCED SCHOOL DAY TIPS

- Labelling foods as "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 milk and yogurt can be semi-frozen to help them stay cold until the second break.
- Use a bento box or divided containers to keep mini-meals together—can use one for each break.
- Listen to concerns about smell and messiness.



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. Younger children need smaller portion sizes than older children. Since boys need more energy per day than girls, some boys may need more servings of food. If your child tells you they are still hungry after finishing their mini-meals, pack more vegetables, fruit, whole grain products or protein foods. If food is coming home at the end of the day, pack smaller portions or less options.

LUNCH BOX CHILI

- 1 cup (250 ml) cooked rice
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (175 ml) canned kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (125 ml) frozen corn kernels
- 1 medium tomato, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ green pepper, chopped
- $\frac{1}{4}$ 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 hot thermos.

PIZZA ROLL-UP

- $\frac{1}{2}$ whole grain tortilla
- 1 tbsp pizza sauce
- 6-8 spinach leaves
- 2 tbsp shredded mozzarella cheese

Spread pizza sauce over tortilla. Layer on spinach then sprinkle cheese over top. Microwave for 20-30 seconds to melt the cheese. Roll up and wrap in tin foil to keep a bit warm until first nutrition break.

BROCCOLI CHEESE EGG CUP

- 1 egg
- 1 tbsp minced broccoli florets
- 1 tbsp cheddar cheese

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a muffin pan with parchment cups or spray well with oil spray. Crack egg into a small bowl and beat until smooth. Stir in broccoli and cheese. Pour into lined muffin cup and bake for 15-20 minutes. Batch cook and make the full pan (1 dozen eggs). Wrap and freeze individually. You may want to pre-cook the broccoli if freezing to minimize sogginess.

OVERNIGHT OATS

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1 tbsp chia seeds (optional)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vanilla Greek yogurt
- 1 cup milk
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tbsp honey or maple syrup

Place all ingredients into a large sealable container. Mix until well combined. Seal container and place in the fridge for at least 2 hours or overnight. If oats are too thick in the morning, add an extra splash of milk. Can be topped with mixed berries.

FOOD AT SCHOOL

Most schools offer food at school for students. Meal and snack programs are free for all students to access if they haven't eaten breakfast or don't have a lunch for any reason. The Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program provides free vegetables and fruit for all elementary students. Some schools have hot lunches available for purchase, like pizza or subs. It's a good idea to boost the nutritional value of these meals by sending some extra veggies and fruit to eat alongside. Many schools also have milk for children to buy. Encourage your child to choose white milk most days.

