

School Lunches + Snacks



School lunches give children the energy and nutrition they need to grow, learn and play. Involving your children in planning and packing their lunches is the best way to make sure your kids enjoy eating it. Choose foods that reflect your culture and that your child enjoys.

Remember to use Canada's Food Guide when planning and packing food for school:

- Include plenty of vegetables and fruits
- Choose whole grain foods
- Include protein foods
- Pack a reusable water bottle for drinking water

School Lunch Ideas


1. Mix and Match Lunch Box

Lunch: Mini whole wheat pitas, cheese, edamame, baby carrots, cucumber, hummus for dipping, pear.

Snack: Yogurt and berries.

For a "Mix and Match" lunch, pack foods from each group:



| Vegetables and Fruits | + Whole Grain Foods* | + Protein Foods |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sliced vegetables and fruits • Cherry tomatoes or baby carrots with dip • Whole fruits (e.g. banana, clementine) • Canned fruit in water • Unsweetened applesauce • Frozen fruit  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crackers • Flatbread (e.g. roti, chapatti, naan) • Breads, pita, tortilla • Brown rice cakes • Grains (e.g. quinoa, brown rice, bulgur, whole wheat couscous, whole grain pasta) <p>*Read the ingredient list - choose grain foods that have the word "whole grain" followed by the name of the grain (e.g. whole grain wheat) as one of the first ingredients.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beans, chickpeas, lentils • Roasted chickpeas • Edamame, tofu • Hummus or bean dips • Cheese cubes, paneer, cottage cheese • Yogurt dips (e.g. tzatziki, raita) • Plain white milk • Hard-boiled eggs • Canned light tuna or salmon • Leftover chicken or meat • Seeds (e.g. pumpkin seeds) |

Lunch images adapted from Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health

More School Lunch Ideas

2. Sandwiches and Wraps

Combine sandwiches and wraps with vegetables and fruits and a snack.



Lunch: Tuna salad and veggie wrap, baby carrots, cucumber, cheese, strawberries, unsweetened fortified soy beverage.

Snack: Banana and pumpkin seeds.

Try these combinations to make a variety of tasty sandwiches/wraps:


Easy Snack Ideas



- Yogurt with fruit
- Fruit, trail mix (seeds and whole grain cereal)
- Vegetables, hummus
- Whole grain crackers, cheese, vegetables

Tip: Keep washed, cut-up vegetables and fruit in the fridge to use for meals and snacks.

Sandwich/Wrap Fillings

| Whole Grain Foods* | Protein Foods | Vegetables and Fruits | Tasty Extras |
|---------------------------|--|---|---|
| Whole wheat tortilla | Seed or soy butter | Banana | |
| Whole wheat bread | Canned light tuna, or leftover roasted chicken or meat, or hard-boiled eggs (mashed) | Chopped celery, green peppers, tomatoes, romaine lettuce | Mayonnaise and mustard, or tzatziki |
| Whole wheat bagel | Cheddar cheese | Cucumbers, tomatoes | Mustard |
| Whole wheat chapatti | Paneer (mashed) | Shredded carrots, chopped romaine lettuce, red onions | Mint chutney |
| Whole wheat pita | Hummus | Cucumbers, bell pepper, red onion, shredded lettuce, jalapeño peppers |  |
| Whole grain corn tortilla | Mashed beans and cheddar cheese | Chopped bell peppers, tomatoes, corn, shredded cabbage | Spices (e.g. chilli, cumin), fresh salsa, guacamole or sour cream (optional) |

*Read the ingredient list - choose grain foods that have the word "whole grain" followed by the name of the grain (e.g. whole grain wheat) as one of the first ingredients.

Tip: If sandwiches and wraps get soggy, try packing sandwich ingredients separately and your child can put together their sandwich at school.

More School Lunch Ideas

3. Leftovers

Lunch: Leftover pasta salad with chickpeas and vegetables, strawberries and peaches.

Snack: Vegetables and cheese.



When cooking meals, plan to make extra for leftovers. Meals that make great leftovers include:

- Stews, chilli, soups, casseroles
- Stir fry, daal, curries, fajitas
- Pasta, bean or couscous salads
- Pasta and rice dishes

Complete the lunch by adding vegetables or fruit sides.

Tip: Choose plant-based protein foods (e.g. seeds, beans, lentils, chickpeas, peas, soy products) more often.

4. Breakfast for Lunch

Eating breakfast in the morning helps children learn better at school. What we may think of as "breakfast" food can also make quick and easy school lunches.



Lunch: Yogurt, fresh or frozen fruit, whole grain cereal or granola with seeds.

Snack: Vegetables, hard-boiled egg, plain white milk.

Try adding vegetables and fruits to your traditional breakfasts such as:

- Ackee and salt fish
- Ful mudammas (stewed fava beans)
- Egg burrito made with leftover scrambled eggs and vegetables



Ful mudammas with eggs

Make Water the #1 Drink!

Pack a reusable water bottle so your child can drink water at school. Other nutritious drinks can include plain white milk, kefir, and unsweetened fortified plant-based beverages (e.g. soy beverage).



How Much Food Should You Pack?



- Ask your child. Your child's appetite is the best guide for how much food to pack.
- Let your child decide how much to eat. Encourage them to take their time to eat and to listen to their feelings of hunger and fullness.
- Your child may eat a lot on some days and very little on others; this is normal.
- Ask your child to bring home leftovers instead of throwing them out at school so you can see what and how much is eaten.

Kids Can...

- Help make and write the grocery list
- Help choose and make recipes (e.g. gather, mix, stir and pour ingredients)
- Choose new vegetables and fruits to try
- Prepare fruit and vegetables (e.g. younger kids can wash produce and tear lettuce, older kids can cut easy-to-grip vegetables and fruit)
- Put together their sandwich or wrap
- Make an easy breakfast (e.g. yogurt with fruit and whole grain cereal)
- Crack and beat an egg or remove eggshells from hard-boiled eggs
- Pack food into containers and lunch bag
- Help clean up

Food Safety Tips

- Wash your hands well before preparing and eating food, and remind your child to do the same.
- Wash all vegetables and fruits under cold running tap water.
- Keep hot foods hot. Pre-heat thermos by filling with boiling water and let stand for a few minutes. Pour out the hot water, put in the heated food and seal the lid.
- Keep cold foods cold. Use an insulated lunch bag and ice packs.
- Clean lunch bags, reusable containers and all utensils every day in hot, soapy water.

Food Allergy Alert

Some foods, such as nuts and nut butters, are not allowed in schools. Always follow your school's rules and policies around food allergies and anaphylaxis.

Additional Resources

For more information and tasty recipes, visit:

- Canada.ca/FoodGuide
- UnlockFood.ca

To speak with a Registered Dietitian, call Telehealth Ontario toll free at 1-866-797-0000.

To find local free or low-cost food programs, call FoodLink at 416-392-6655 or email foodlink@foodshare.net

