



Region of Waterloo  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
EMERGENCY SERVICES

# School Lunch Your Kids Will Munch

## Kids who eat well, learn better!

Eating a variety of healthy choices as recommended by **Canada's food guide** can help children to be more alert and ready to learn. Studies show that children who eat healthier perform better at school.



## What to include in a healthy school lunch

Include at least one choice from each of the three groupings in Canada's food guide. Involve your child in planning their lunch; they might be more likely to eat and enjoy their meals and snacks. They have probably learned about **Canada's food guide** in class!

### Follow these easy steps:

1. Include plenty of **vegetables and fruits!**
2. Choose **protein foods** such as bean dip, a hard-cooked egg, low-fat and low-sodium hard cheese, light tuna or salmon or sliced lean meat.
3. Add **whole grain foods** such as bread, pita, brown rice or quinoa.



## Veggies and fruit on the go!

To help children get enough each day, include vegetables or fruits in every meal and snack. For the best value, buy local produce when it is in season. Save unsweetened packaged fruit for days when you run out of fresh fruit.



## Did you know...

Children usually have about 20 minutes to eat lunch at school. Keep portions small for younger children with smaller appetites. Children usually like "finger foods" that can be easily picked up and eaten in two small bites. Whenever possible, peel fruit and cut up food into smaller bite-sized pieces.

# Make Your Own “Lunch Kits”

When in a hurry pre-packaged kits may seem convenient, but store bought lunch kits are high in salt, sugar and saturated fat and low in fibre. These products cost a lot of money and won't give kids what they need to be healthy and stay energized all day long!

**Make your own lunch kits using reusable containers!**

## Ideas for packing tasty and healthy choices:

### Vegetables and fruits

- leafy greens such as lettuce, kale, arugula or spinach
- sliced tomato, cucumber, green pepper, onions or mushrooms
- roasted eggplant or zucchini
- carrot, celery or turnip sticks
- strips of sweet pepper
- cherry tomatoes
- snow peas
- apple or pear slices
- broccoli or cauliflower flowerets
- grapes, strawberries, raspberries or blueberries
- apricots, peaches, plums or nectarines
- watermelon slices



### Protein foods

- plain low-fat milk or unsweetened fortified soy beverage
- low-fat and low-sodium hard cheese
  - cubes or slices of leftover lean chicken, turkey, pork or beef
  - canned light tuna or salmon
- sunflower or pumpkin seeds
- hummus or bean dip
- plain low-fat yogurt
- lentils
- tofu
- hard-cooked egg

### Whole grain foods

- brown or wild rice
- whole grain pasta
- whole grain bagels, tortilla, pitas, breads, buns, English muffins or crackers
- whole grain chapatti, roti or naan
- quinoa, plain oatmeal or other cooked whole grains
- whole grain cereal, low in sugar (five grams of sugar or less per serving)

**note:** small, hard or round foods may be a choking risk for children under four years of age

Make lunch kits, soups, stews, sandwiches and wraps with these healthy choices!

Visit Canada's food guide for more healthy recipes and meal ideas! [www.canada.ca/foodguide](http://www.canada.ca/foodguide)

## Don't forget the snacks!

Children need a lot of nutrients to support growth. Pack at least one snack in your child's lunch bag each day.

### Try these lip-smacking ideas!

- carrots, broccoli, red, green or yellow pepper, celery, or cucumber with hummus
- low-fat, low-sodium hard cheese and whole grain crackers
- cut up fruit with plain low-fat yogurt
- whole grain English muffin and apple slices

### Snacks to avoid:

- potato chips, vegetable chips, corn chips and cheese puffs
- candies and chocolate bars
- granola bars with marshmallows, candy or chocolate
- muffins, cakes, doughnuts, pastries and cookies
- chewy fruit snacks
- processed meat sticks or deli meat (e.g., pepperoni, turkey, etc.)



## Pack healthy drinks

### Choose everyday:

- water
- plain milk (2%, 1% or skim)
- plain unsweetened fortified soy beverage

**Ask your child's school principal or teacher if students are allowed to have a water bottle at their desk**

### Avoid:

- 100% fruit juice
- fruit beverages, drinks, punches or cocktails
- flavoured milk or sweetened fortified soy beverage
- iced tea
- regular or diet pop
- sports drinks
- energy drinks

## Tips for packing and handling a safe school lunch

- Use an insulated lunch bag and a thermos to keep cold food cold and hot food hot. Warm the thermos with boiling water before filling it with steaming hot food.
- Include a freezer pack to help keep lunches cold.
- Wash all vegetables and fruit before packing.
- Wash reusable beverage containers at the end of the day with soap and hot water.
- Do not re-send sandwiches or hot food. If fruit has been peeled, cut, portioned from a can or previously frozen, it should not be re-sent. Fresh whole fruit and other snacks can be safely repacked.
- Do not re-use wrappings.
- Teach children to wash their hands before and after eating.

## Allergy Alert!

Peanut butter, peanuts and other nuts are healthy food choices. However, many schools have banned food containing peanuts or nuts to protect the safety of children with allergies. Check with your school about foods that are not allowed in your child's classroom.

# Packing for nutrition breaks

If your child has more than one nutrition break during the school day, you can divide the food into a meal and a snack or into two smaller meals. It may be helpful to label, colour code or separate the food planned for each nutrition break within the lunch bag.



## Examples of healthy meal ideas

	Break one	Break two
Monday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• plain low-fat yogurt</li> <li>• strawberries, sliced</li> <li>• whole oats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cooked turkey on whole grain bread</li> <li>• baby carrots and sliced red peppers</li> </ul>
Tuesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• whole grain cereal (low in sugar) in a container with lid and spoon</li> <li>• plain low-fat milk</li> <li>• banana</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• whole grain pita with low-fat, low-sodium hard cheese or hummus</li> <li>• cherry tomatoes</li> <li>• cucumber slices</li> <li>• pear</li> </ul>
Wednesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• low-fat, low-sodium hard cheese</li> <li>• whole grain crackers</li> <li>• grapes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• light tuna on whole grain bread</li> <li>• green salad</li> <li>• unsweetened fortified soy beverage</li> </ul>
Thursday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• whole grain homemade waffles</li> <li>• unsweetened applesauce</li> <li>• plain low-fat yogurt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• homemade soup with lean meat and vegetables or chili</li> <li>• whole grain crackers</li> </ul>
Friday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• half of a whole grain tortilla with vegetables and hummus or lean cooked meat</li> <li>• plain low-fat milk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• other half of whole grain tortilla with vegetables and hummus or lean cooked meat</li> <li>• fruit cup packed in water</li> </ul>



For more information visit [www.unlockfood.ca](http://www.unlockfood.ca) or call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 (TTY 1-866-797-0007) to talk to a Registered Dietitian for free.