

School Lunch Your Kids Will Munch



Eating for learning

Studies show that well-nourished children are able to concentrate longer and perform better at school. Children are ready to learn and are more alert when they eat a variety of healthy choices according to Canada's Food Guide.

What to include in a healthy school lunch

Foods from the four food groups in *Canada's Food Guide* give the nourishment kids need to grow and learn. A balanced lunch includes at least one choice from each food group. Get your kids involved in planning what will go in their lunch. They have probably learned about Canada's Food Guide in class!

Follow these easy steps:

1. Start with a choice of **Meat or Alternatives**; for example sliced lean meat, a hard-cooked egg, tuna salad or bean dip.
2. Add a **Grain Product** such as whole grain bread, crackers or pita.
3. Don't forget a **Vegetable or Fruit** choice.
4. Pack **Milk or Milk Alternatives** like milk, cheese, yogurt or fortified soy beverage to balance out the meal.

Finish up with some dessert. A choice from the Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives food group or some fruit is a healthy option. (See page 4 for suggestions).

Tips for packing and handling a safe school lunch

- Use insulated lunch bags and a thermos to help keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot. Warm thermos with boiling water before filling it with steaming hot food.
- A frozen juice box, a freezer pack or sandwiches made with frozen bread can help to keep lunch foods cold.
- Wash all vegetables and fruit before packing.
- Do not re-send sandwiches or hot foods. Fruits and other snacks can be safely repacked. Do not re-use wrappings.
- Wash reusable beverage container at the end of the day with soap and hot water.
- Teach children to wash their hands before eating.

Did you know . . .

Children usually have about 20 minutes to eat lunch at school. For younger children with smaller appetites, keep portions small. Peel fruit when possible and cut up foods into smaller bite-sized pieces.



Allergy Alert!

Peanut butter, peanuts, and other nuts are healthy food choices. However, there are children with an allergy to these foods in almost every school in Waterloo Region. A number of schools have banned foods containing peanuts or other nuts from lunch boxes to protect the safety of children with allergies. Check with your school about foods that are not allowed in your child's classroom.

Make Your Own “Lunch Kits”

Kids often want fun, packaged foods they see on TV or in their friends’ lunches. When pressed for time, convenience foods are helpful. But, packing these in your kids’ lunches most of the time won’t give them what they need to be healthy and stay energized all day long. They are an expensive, but also a less nutritious choice!

Store bought lunch kits are:

- High in unhealthy fats (saturated and trans fat)
- Low in fibre
- High in sugar and sodium



Make your own lunch kits using reusable containers with sections!

Ideas for packing tasty and healthy choices:

Grain Products

- Whole grain bagels, wraps, pitas
- Whole grain, low sugar breakfast cereals
- Whole grain crackers
- Whole grain pasta salad
- Whole grain bread, buns or muffins
- Whole grain rice



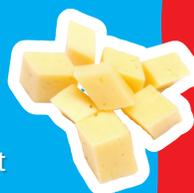
Vegetables and Fruit

- Baby carrots
- Celery sticks
- Strips of sweet pepper
- Slices of cucumber
- Cherry tomatoes
- Broccoli or cauliflower flowerettes
- Turnip sticks
- Dried fruit such as raisins and apricots



Milk and Alternatives

- Yogurt (fruit-flavoured or add fruit to plain yogurt)
- Cheese cubes or slices
- Yogurt dip
- Cheese strings
- Mini yogurt
- Yogurt tubes
- Fortified soy beverage



Meat and Alternatives

- Rolled-up sliced meat, nitrate free such as turkey or chicken
- Cubes or slices of leftover chicken, turkey or beef
- Hard-cooked egg, sliced
- Hummus or bean dip
- Sunflower or pumpkin seeds
- Canned tuna (yellowfin/skipjack) and salmon
- Sunflower seeds



Super Sandwich Suggestions

Avoid the sandwich slump! Here are a few fresh ideas for the most common lunchtime food.

Base (Grain Product)

- Whole grain mini pita pockets
- Whole grain bagel or whole wheat bread
- Whole grain or flavoured wraps
- Whole grain roll or mini submarine bun



Filling (Meat or Alternative)

- Hummus or bean spread
- Egg salad, tuna salad or chicken salad
- Bean spread or grilled chicken slices
- Turkey or lean roast beef

Topper (Milk Products or Vegetable and Fruit)

- Lettuce, cucumber
- Green pepper slices, grated carrot
- Chopped tomato, lettuce
- Sliced cheese

Cut sandwiches or wraps into smaller pieces. Children usually like “finger foods” that can be easily picked up and eaten in two small bites.



Veggies and Fruit To Go!



Many children do not eat enough vegetables and fruit. Try to include one of each in your child’s lunch everyday. Locally-grown vegetables and fruit usually offer the best taste, freshness and value. Also, buying local helps to support our farms.



Keep applesauce and unsweetened canned fruit for those days when you run out of fresh fruit.

What’s to Drink?

Give some careful thought to what is packed for a lunch-time drink. Beverages should also give kids nutrients they need for growth and development.

Read labels carefully to be sure you’re making a healthy choice. Or, pack a healthy beverage in a reusable beverage container.

See page 4 for healthy drink suggestions.



Don't Forget Snacks!



Make sure to include enough food in your child's lunch bag for a healthy snack. It is important for children to eat at least one healthy snack at school every day. Children's growing bodies need lots of nutrients, which they often don't get enough of from their main meals.

Try these lip-smacking ideas!

- Air-popped popcorn sprinkled with parmesan cheese
- Whole grain mini muffins and sunflower seeds
- Cheese cubes and whole grain crackers
- Broccoli "trees" and red pepper rings with hummus
- Pineapple chunks with vanilla yogurt

Snacks to pass on:

- Potato chips, corn chips, cheese puffs
- Candies, chocolate bars
- Granola bars with marshmallows or chocolate
- Cakes and pastries
- Cream filled or chocolate cookies
- Chewy fruit snacks

Ask your child's school principal or teacher about allowing students to eat healthy snacks in class, like veggies and fruit, and having a water bottle at their desk.

Make Your Own Snack Mix

Mix together:

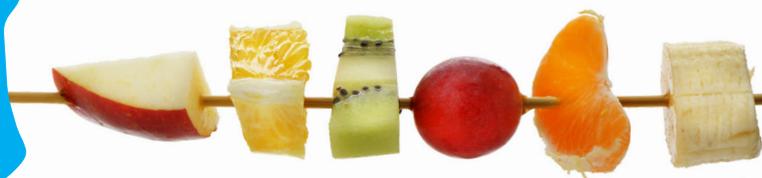
- Cereal that has four or more grams of fibre and eight or less grams of sugar
- Dried fruit
- Pumpkin seeds
- Sunflower seeds
- Unsalted pretzels



Keep in a large container and use as needed when packing lunches and snacks.

What about Desserts?

Pack a nutritious and tasty dessert. Try fruit kabobs with yogurt dip, homemade oatmeal cookies or fresh berries.



Pack Healthy Drink Choices



Choose everyday:

- Water
- Plain milk (2%, 1% or skim)
- Plain fortified soy beverage

Choose sometimes:

- 100% unsweetened fruit juice (limit to ½ cup [125 ml] serving per day)
- Chocolate milk (2%, 1% or skim)
- Flavoured fortified soy beverage

Avoid:

- Sports drinks
- Pop/diet pop
- Energy drinks
- Fruit drink, punches or cocktails
- Iced tea



For more information call 519-883-2004 ext. 5607 or visit www.regionofwaterloo.ca/nutrition