



# Eat Well, Play Well – At School!

School is where children go to learn, play and develop skills that will last them a lifetime. Well nourished children are better able to pay attention and learn in school. Help your children to be their best at school by fueling their days with healthy food choices.

## Lunch Matters for Children

Between grade one and the end of high school, a student may eat more than 2,400 lunches at school! Creating tasty, nutritious school lunches is a challenge for many parents. The good news is that with a little bit of planning and a few ideas, you can put together a lunch that not only tastes great, but also packs a nutritional punch:

- **Recruit some help** - Children may be more likely to eat a lunch that they have been involved in creating. Let your children choose some of the foods that will go into their lunch bags. Plan or prepare school lunches together - make it fun!
- **Get organized** - Speed up the preparation process by organizing lunch supplies such as insulated containers, lunch bags or boxes, reusable drinking boxes, napkins and cutlery in one spot.
- **Lay a solid foundation** - Teach children to include foods from at least three of the four food groups of *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* for lunch.
- **Mix it up** - Offer a variety of foods to prevent boredom and make lunch a meal that your child looks forward to. Short on ideas? Try the following:

Hummus, whole wheat pita bread wedges, pepper strips, yogurt, 100% fruit juice	Whole grain tortilla filled with tuna salad and shredded lettuce, celery sticks, grapes, chocolate milk
Whole grain crackers, hard cooked egg, carrot sticks with dip, apple, milk	Leftover whole grain pasta, meat sauce, melon cubes, mini banana muffin, milk
Picnic Lunch: cut up cheese, leftover chicken or roast beef, whole wheat bread sticks, fresh fruit salad, milk	Cold pizza, cherry tomatoes and cucumber slices, homemade oatmeal cookie, 100% fruit juice
Whole wheat bagel topped with cheddar cheese and apple slices, graham crackers, 100% vegetable juice.	Vegetarian chili, small whole wheat roll, nectarine, yogurt drink

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**Did You Know..?** Your child may have less than 15 minutes to eat their lunch at school. Keep it simple for them – peel oranges, slice fruit, include small servings and use easy-to-open containers.

**Put safety first** - Keep foods fresh and safe to eat.

- Use insulated lunch box and insulated containers to keep hot foods, such as soups or casseroles, and to keep cold foods cold.
- Heat hot items until piping hot. Fill your insulated container with boiling water and let it sit for a few minutes. Empty the water and then fill the container with hot food.
- Chill items such as milk, yogurt or coleslaw before placing them in the insulated container. Use a small freezer pack to keep perishable foods cold (e.g milk products), including sandwiches that are made with mayonnaise or filled with meat, egg, cheese, fish, or poultry.
- Keep lunches in the fridge until your child is leaving for school.
- Wash fruits and vegetables well before packing.
- Don't let your kids eat perishable foods that come home uneaten from their lunch. Freezer packs keep foods cold for a few hours, but not all day long.

**Make their day!** - Surprise your child - write a special note and tuck it into the lunch bag. Add a colorful napkin or a cartoon.

### Don't Forget Fluids

Growing, active children need lots of fluids. Not getting enough fluids can lead to dehydration, headaches, fatigue and difficulty concentrating. Have plenty of fluids such as water and milk available throughout the day.

Satisfy your child's thirst with water. Pack a reusable bottle filled with water in your child's lunch each day. Encourage teachers to allow individual water bottles in the classroom. To ensure the beverage is safe, have your child bring the water bottle or refillable beverage container home daily so it can be washed.

Pack lunchtime drinks that contain no added sugar most of the time. For more on making healthy drink choices for your children, visit [Sugary Drink Sense](#).

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