

What's For Lunch?

Tips for school lunches

- Get children involved! Have them help with planning, shopping and packing. Children are more likely to eat their lunch when they help to plan and prepare the meal.
- Plan ahead! Think of lunch when making dinners. Make extra portions of casseroles, stews, soups or chili. Keep leftovers in the fridge to use for lunches within 1 to 2 days. You can also freeze leftovers in single servings to use later.
- Keep lunch interesting! Sandwiches are easy to pack in lunches. Try whole grain breads, buns, small bagels, pitas, tortillas or crackers and a variety of fillings. Cut younger children's sandwiches in triangles or strips or other fun shapes.
- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold! See the "Packing lunches" section, on page 2.

Pack it up healthy!

Pack a variety of food choices from each of the four food groups from Canada's Food Guide: Vegetables and Fruit, Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives and Meat and Alternatives.

Vegetables and Fruit

- tomato, cucumber, grated carrots or lettuce in a sandwich
- homemade vegetable soup
- carrot or celery sticks, cucumber slices or snap peas
- grated carrots and raisin salad
- 100% pure fruit or low salt (sodium) vegetable juices; limit to no more than ½ cup (125 mL) per day
- fresh, frozen or dried fruit without added sugar
- fruit canned in juice

Grain Products

Choose lower fat whole grains most often:

- muffins
- whole grain crackers
- breadsticks
- cereal bars
- rice cakes
- whole grain dry cereal
- whole grain breads, bagels, buns or English muffins
- biscuits, scones
- naan breads
- pita bread
- leftover noodles, spaghetti, ravioli, or rice casserole
- whole grain flour tortillas
- plain popcorn

Milk and Alternatives

Choose lower fat milk products:

- milk or fortified soy beverage
- soups made with milk
- plain yogurt – add fruit or use as a dip for vegetables
- low fat cheese slices or cubes

Meat and Alternatives

- lean meat, fish, chicken, turkey or egg fillings in a sandwich
- chicken leg, boiled egg or tofu
- chili, stew, meatballs, lentil soup or baked beans
- hummus, black bean dip
- nuts and seeds

Food allergies are common! Some schools may request that certain foods not be sent due to allergies- check with your school for any allergy guidelines.

No microwave? No problem!

Many schools do not have microwave ovens for reheating foods. Foods can be heated at home in the morning and put into a wide-mouth thermos so they will stay hot until lunch time.

Menu ideas

- whole wheat tortilla rolled with turkey and low fat cheese, a banana and low fat milk
- baked beans, a whole wheat bun, low fat milk and an orange
- submarine sandwich on a whole wheat bun with meat, cheese, lettuce and tomato slices, and low fat milk
- small oatmeal or bran muffin, low fat cheddar cheese cubes, celery sticks and ½ cup (125 mL) 100% pure fruit juice
- tuna salad on whole wheat bread, orange and low fat yogurt
- whole grain crackers, low fat cheese, sliced turkey, and yogurt and frozen berries
- cold vegetable pizza, a peach and low fat milk
- low salt cream of chicken soup made with milk, whole wheat bun, and apple slices
- meat kabobs, low fat cheese, cherry tomatoes, a whole grain bun and low fat milk
- mini whole wheat bagel with sliced ham and low fat cheese, carrot sticks and low fat milk
- egg salad with sliced cucumber and shredded lettuce in pita bread pockets, pudding made with milk and a banana
- whole wheat pita wedges and hummus, fresh veggies, yogurt and ½ cup (125 mL) 100% pure fruit juice

For more healthy recipe ideas for kids, see: *Healthy U*
<http://www.healthyalberta.com/HealthyEating/344.htm>

Kid friendly recipes

Tortilla Roll-up

Combine ½ cup (125 mL) diced, cooked chicken, turkey or ham with 30 mL (2 Tbsp) grated cheese, your choice of chopped vegetables, and 15 mL (1 Tbsp) salsa. Place on 8" inch whole wheat tortilla. Roll up tortilla. Just before eating, heat in microwave for 1 to 2 minutes. Makes 1 serving.

Pasta Salad:

Mix together 2 cups (500 mL) of cooked whole wheat macaroni, ½ cup (125 mL) cubed low fat cheese, ½ cup (125 mL) frozen mixed vegetables. Add ½ cup (125 mL) of low fat Italian dressing. Makes 4 servings.

Packing lunches

- Keep lunch supplies together to make preparing lunches easier.
- Use thermos containers for hot or cold foods.
 - **For hot foods** (chili, soup or stew): rinse the thermos with hot water, add piping hot food and close tightly.
 - **For cold foods** (drinks, cold soups or yogurt): chill thermos with cold water or place in fridge overnight (with lid off), add cold food and close tightly.
- If food will be reheated in a microwave, it should be kept cold until lunch. Use only microwave safe containers for reheating.
- Frozen containers of milk or juice help chill sandwiches and will thaw to drink by lunch time. A freezer pack can also be used to keep items cold in the lunch box. Keep lunches in the fridge if possible.
- Wash and peel enough vegetables for several days. Store in container and keep in the fridge.
- Sandwiches can be made ahead of time and frozen to make preparing lunches easier.
- Limit sweet foods; they can cause tooth decay.