

# Special Lunch Days

Special lunch days are sometimes part of school activities. These events give schools or parent councils a chance to model healthy eating and offer healthy lunch choices to students.

Ordering foods from restaurants saves time, but sometimes you have to search for healthy food choices. This handout will help you make choices so that special lunch days are healthier and fun!

## Offering healthy choices

Offer foods that meet the 'Choose Most Often' and 'Choose Sometimes' criteria from the [Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth](#).

### Tips:

- Use the nutrition information from your local food provider or restaurant and compare it to the *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth*.
- Include food from all 4 food groups from [Canada's Food Guide](#). For example:
  - fresh vegetables or fruit
  - unsweetened, canned fruit
  - salad with dressing on the side
  - milk
  - lower fat yogurt
  - whole grain products, like buns or noodles
- Look for main lunch items that include choices from the Vegetables and Fruit or Milk and Alternatives food groups.
- Decrease the amount of sauce and condiments by not ordering them or asking for small pre-portioned amounts.

- Customize menu options to limit less healthy side dishes like fries or chips. Instead, serve choices like fruit or salads.



### A special lunch day menu example:

Below is an example of a meal with foods from all 4 food groups:



If a special lunch day menu does not contain all 4 food groups, tell parents so they can send other foods from home.

## Making special lunches healthier

### For healthier subs, pitas, and sandwiches ask for:

- whole grain breads, pitas, wraps, or rolls
- added vegetables
- lean meats (turkey, chicken, or tuna)
- lower fat cheese
- pre-portioned condiments



### For a healthier pizza ask for:

- whole wheat or multigrain crust
- added vegetable toppings
- tomato sauce instead of cream sauce or BBQ sauce
- lower fat cheese
- leaner meats, such as chicken, lean ground beef, or ham
- vegetarian pizza



### For healthier hamburgers ask for:

- whole grain buns
- grilled chicken or vegetarian burger
- lean or extra lean meat
- plain hamburgers without extra sauces
- pre-portioned condiments
- lower fat cheese for cheese burgers



### For healthier pasta ask for:

- whole grain pasta
- added vegetables
- lower salt tomato sauce
- white sauce made with milk instead of cream



### For healthier soups ask for:

- lower salt broth-based soups
- added vegetables
- lentils, beans, or lean meats
- whole grain noodles, rice, or barley



### For healthier smoothies:

- use frozen unsweetened fruit instead of juice
- instead of ice cream, use milk, plain fortified soy beverage, or plain yogurt



## What about hot dogs?

**Hotdogs do not meet healthy eating guidelines because they are too high in unhealthy fat and sodium.**

If you are serving hotdogs, consider:

- serving them on whole grain buns
- choosing turkey, chicken, vegetarian, or lean all beef hot dogs that may be lower in fat
- using smaller hot dog portions instead of jumbo sizes
- reading labels to choose hot dogs that are lower in fat and sodium
- providing pre-portioned condiments