

# Healthy School Lunches and Snacks!



Your child's school lunches and snacks are a major source of the nutrition that they need to grow and develop. The foods you pack your child will give them the energy and nutrients they need to learn and play. Without enough energy from healthy foods, your child may feel tired and find it difficult to concentrate in class. Healthy lunches and snacks are the first step to academic success!

## Steps to packing a healthy lunch and snacks:

### STEP 1: Get your child involved

- From planning to packing, get the whole family involved! Give your child healthy options to pick from- they will be more likely to eat a lunch they choose.
- Older children can make their own lunches. Younger children can put foods in containers, or wash fruits and vegetables.
- Take your child grocery shopping and let them choose 1 or 2 of their favourite foods like vegetables, fruits and yogurts.

### STEP 2: Think food groups

- Aim to have at least 3 of the 4 food groups in your child's lunch.
- Snacks should include at least 2 of the 4 food groups. Think of snacks as a "mini meal".

Try some of these simple snack ideas:

- Whole grain cracker with cheese
- Fresh cut-up fruit with yogurt dip
- Small muffin and a yogurt tube
- Nut-free trail mix
- Hummus and veggies



### STEP 3: Think outside the sandwich

- Get creative when choosing foods for your child's lunch. Small changes can make lunch time more interesting for your little eater, making them more likely to eat the foods you pack. Try these ideas:
  - Why not breakfast for lunch?! Pack hot oatmeal in a thermos with frozen berries and pumpkin seeds with a cold soy or milk beverage.
  - Marinated cooked tofu in a whole wheat tortilla wrap with grated carrots and lettuce. Add fruit and yogurt on the side.
- Make it easy for them. Lunch and snack breaks can be rushed. Cut, peel and spread in advance. Choose seedless fruits. Easy foods are more likely to be eaten!

## STEP 4: How much food do I need to pack?

- Schools typically have two snack breaks and one lunch break.
- Canada's Food Guide can help you figure out how much food to pack. For a school-aged child a balanced lunch would typically include:
  - 1-2 servings of Fruits/Vegetables, 1 serving from the Grain Products, 1 serving from the Milk and Alternatives and ½ a serving from the Meat and Alternatives
  - The addition of two balanced snacks would make this a healthy school day!
- Every child has different energy needs, which can change from day to day and over time. Involve your child when packing their lunch so they can tell you how much food they need.

## STEP 5: Pack safe food!

- Wash your hands and prepare lunches on a clean surface.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables even if they say "pre-washed".
- Do not reuse perishable foods (i.e. meats, fish, milk products) that come home uneaten from your child's lunch.
- Keep lunches in the fridge until your child leaves for school.
- Keep cold foods COLD and hot foods HOT!
  - Use an insulated lunch bag with a small ice pack for foods that need to stay cool. A frozen bottle of water would also work!
  - Put foods that need to stay hot in a thermos. A thermos is also good for smoothies or milk.
- Be sure to keep reusable containers clean by washing them with warm soapy water.
- Be aware of the food allergies in your child's classroom. Most schools do not allow peanuts or nut products.

### Snack Time Favourites

**Nut-Free Trail Mix:** Combine: Raisins, dried cranberries, dried apricots, apple rings, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds and your child's favourite cereal. Have your child make this and store in an air-tight container.

**Baked Sweet Potato 'Fries' with Ketchup:** Wash and cut 2 sweet potatoes into 1-inch wide wedges. In a small bowl, toss with 1 tbsp. oil, chili powder, and 1 tsp salt. Lay potatoes on baking sheet and cook at 425°F until soft (20-25minutes). Dunk in ketchup!

**Roasted Chickpeas:** Drain and rinse 1 can of chickpeas. Dry and toss in small bowl with 1 tbsp. olive oil, and your favourite spices (i.e. garlic power, salt and chili powder). Arrange on baking sheet and cook at 400°F for ~ 30minutes or until lightly browned. Careful not to burn!

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