

# Packing Healthy School Lunches

Whether your child has two nutrition breaks or one lunch break, include choices from all four food groups at each meal.



**4 for Lunch**

to help give them the energy and nutrition they need to learn and play at school.

**Aim for 4 food groups at lunch.**

## Lunch Ideas

Snap Peas  
Orange Slices  
Tuna Salad  
Whole Wheat Pita  
Yogurt

Apple Slices  
Sweet Pepper Strips  
Cold Chicken Leg  
Whole Grain Crackers  
Milk

Bunch of Grapes  
Baby Carrots  
Chili Con Carne  
Whole Wheat Bun  
Fortified Soy Beverage

Cherry Tomatoes  
Zucchini Sticks  
Hard Boiled Egg  
Bran Muffin  
Yogurt Dip

**2 for Snack**

**Aim for at least 2 food groups at snack.**

## Snack Ideas

Fruit Kabob  
Milk

Cheese  
Whole Grain Crackers  
Cucumber Slices

Berries  
Yogurt

Broccoli  
Cauliflower  
Whole Wheat Pita  
Hummus Dip

Watermelon  
Slice  
Mini Whole  
Grain Muffin

Find ideas and recipes at [healthykidsptbo.ca](http://healthykidsptbo.ca), [eatrightontario.ca](http://eatrightontario.ca), or [cookspiration.com](http://cookspiration.com)

The evidence is clear: well-nourished children perform better in class!

# Build A Healthy Lunch

Include at least one serving from each of the four food groups from Canada's Food Guide.

Pick and pack one food from each column to make your

**4 for Lunch**

## Vegetables & Fruit

- broccoli, cauliflower
- carrots, celery
- cucumber slices
- tossed salad
- grape tomatoes
- bok choy
- roasted squash
- coleslaw
- vegetable soups
- zucchini sticks
- steamed peas or beans
- sliced red/yellow/green/orange peppers
- apples, bananas
- grapes
- clementines, orange slices
- peaches, pears
- berries (*fresh or frozen*)
- unsweetened applesauce
- canned fruit (*packed in water*)
- watermelon
- pineapple
- kiwi

## Grain Products

**Go for whole grains!**

- bread (*oatmeal, rye, pumpernickel, cracked wheat*)
- quinoa/couscous
- whole grain bagels
- rolls/buns
- pancakes/waffles
- english muffins
- pasta salad
- bread sticks
- whole grain crackers
- whole grain muffins
- pita/naan bread
- tortillas/wraps
- rice cakes
- dry cereal
- rice (*brown, white, wild*)

## Milk & Alternatives

- white milk
- unsweetened fortified soy beverage
- yogurt (*drinks, tubes, cups*)
- cheese (*cubes, strings, sliced*)
- milk-based soup
- chocolate milk
- cottage cheese
- kefir

## Meat & Alternatives

- bean salad
- sunflower/pumpkin seeds
- baked beans
- nut butter, wow butter, or seed butter (*if not restricted*)
- refried beans
- tofu
- hummus or bean dip
- roasted chickpeas
- black beans
- chili
- leftover meats or fish (*turkey, chicken, beef, baked salmon, shrimp stir fry*)
- meatloaf
- meat stew
- canned salmon or tuna
- egg salad or quiche
- hard boiled eggs

## Best Beverages Water is the way to **GO!**

### Choose Everyday:

- water
- white milk or unsweetened fortified soy beverage

### Choose Sometimes:

- If offered, limit to no more than 125 mL, or a half cup per day.*
- 100% unsweetened fruit or vegetable juice
  - Chocolate Milk
  - Sweetened Milk Alternatives

### Avoid or Choose Rarely:

- These drinks are often high in added sugar. Some are high in caffeine.*
- pop, fruit drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks, vitamin enhanced water, iced tea or coffee

**TIP:** Send water in a reusable bottle everyday!

**TIP:** Whole or cut up fruit contains fibre and is a healthier choice than juice.



# Ask a Dietitian: Help with Healthy Lunches

## How can I save money when packing lunches?

- **In-season vegetables and fruit can be cheaper.** See produce availability guide at [healthykidsptbo.ca](http://healthykidsptbo.ca). Frozen vegetables and fruit are also good options! Try frozen berries on yogurt or canned/frozen peaches with cinnamon on cottage cheese.
- **Swap in beans, chickpeas, or lentils instead of meat.** They are inexpensive, delicious and nutritious! Vegetarian chili in a thermos is a nice warm meal on a cold day.
- **Limit prepackaged snacks and pre-prepared foods.** These can be expensive! Packing your own whole grain crackers, cheese, bean dip, and vegetable sticks saves money.



## What if I don't have time to make lunches?

- **Prepare easy foods on the weekend or the night before:** Make time to chop vegetables and fruit, boil eggs, or put hummus, rice, crackers, or baby-carrots/tomatoes into grab-and-go containers. You will be set for busy mornings!
- **When you do cook, make extra, and send left-overs in your child's lunch the next day.** Freeze single serving portions of left-overs to heat up and send in a thermos for days when you are short on time to cook.
- **Invite children to "be the chef"** to make their own lunches, with you!



## Help! There are healthy foods that my child isn't eating in their lunch.

- **Don't give up!** Many children need to taste a food 8-15 times before liking it.
- **Children are more likely to eat what they have helped prepare.** Involving children with growing and tasting vegetables and fruit, meal planning, shopping, preparing food, and packing lunches can help them accept new foods.
- **Be a role-model.** Preparing, eating, and showing enjoyment of healthy choices in front of children helps them to do the same. Aim to eat meals together each week.
- **It's normal if your child's appetite is up and down.** The role of parents and caregivers is to decide which healthy foods are offered, and when and where children eat their meals and snacks. Children decide if, what, and how much to eat from what is offered.
- **Get support from a dietitian if you have questions about your child's nutrition.** Call **Eat Right Ontario** for free at **1-877-510-5102**, or find a Registered Dietitian in the Peterborough County/City at [www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca/RDsinPtbo](http://www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca/RDsinPtbo).



### TIP: Litterless lunches are in!

- Use a reusable lunch bag.
- Pack washable cutlery and a cloth napkin.
- Use reusable containers and cloth bags for food and drinks.



## Remember to Keep Food Safe

### Keep Cold Foods Colder than 4°C

- Pack an ice pack or freeze yogurt to keep food cold.
- Pack food right from the freezer or fridge just before leaving the house.

milk  
fish  
meat

eggs  
cheese  
yogurt

**COLD**

### Keep Hot Foods Hotter than 60°C

- Use a thermos for hot food.
- **TIP:** heat your thermos by adding hot water for a few minutes, drain it, and then add your hot food. Keep it closed until lunchtime.

soup  
chili

stew  
pasta

**HOT**

*Throw out any food leftovers that come back after school.*

**TIP:** Insulated lunch boxes or bags help keep cold food cold and hot food hot.

## Keep Food Clean

- Clean your hands and equipment with hot, soapy water before and after preparing foods.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables.
- Do not reuse foil or plastic wrap from the previous day's lunch.
- Wash reusable containers after each use.



### MORE TIPS: Packing Lunches!

- Get colourful! Include tasty foods with lots of colour and textures. If it looks good they'll try it.
- Keep portions small and simple. There is a limited amount of time to eat at school, so peel fruit when possible and cut up foods into smaller, bite-sized pieces. Use containers they know how to open.

