



Labrador-Grenfell
Health

School Lunch Your Kids Will Munch



Eating for learning

Studies show that well-nourished children are able to concentrate longer and perform better at school. Children are ready to learn and are more alert when they eat a variety of healthy choices according to Canada's Food Guide.

What to include in a healthy school lunch

Foods from the four food groups in Canada's Food Guide give the nourishment kids need to grow and learn. A balanced lunch includes at least one choice from each food group. Get your kids involved in planning what will go in their lunch. They have probably learned about Canada's Food Guide in class!

Follow these easy steps:

1. Start with a whole grain product such as bread, flat breads, crackers or rice.
2. Add a meat or alternative such as egg, tuna, hummus or baked chicken
3. Include vegetables such as tomato, lettuce, peppers, cucumber or carrot.
4. Add a milk or alternative such as plain white milk, yogurt or cheese
5. Finish off with a fruit such as apple, banana, frozen berries, a fruit cup or dried fruit like raisins.

Tips for packing and handling a safe school lunch

- Use insulated lunch bags and a thermos to help keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot. Warm thermos with boiling water before filling it with steaming hot food.
- A freezer pack can help to keep lunch foods cold.
- Wash all vegetables and fruit before packing.
- Sandwiches, hot foods and milk products that come home in lunch bags are not safe to eat and repack for another day. Do not reuse wrappings.
- Fruits and other snacks that keep at room temperature can be safely repacked
- Wash reusable beverage and food containers at the end of the day with soap and hot water.
- Teach children to wash their hands before eating.

Did you know . . .

Children usually have about 20 minutes to eat lunch at school. For younger children save time by peeling fruit when possible and cut up foods into smaller pieces.



Allergy Alert!

Peanut butter, peanuts, and other nuts are healthy food choices. However, there are children with an allergy to these foods in almost every school in Newfoundland and Labrador. A number of schools have banned foods containing peanuts or other nuts from lunch boxes to protect the safety of children with allergies. Check with your school about foods that are not allowed.

Make Your Own “Lunch Kits”

Kids often want fun, packaged foods they see on TV or in their friends’ lunches. When in a hurry pre-packaged kits may seem convenient. But, store bought lunch kits can be high in salt, sugar and unhealthy fat and low in fibre. These products will cost a lot of money and won’t give kids what they need to be healthy and stay energized all day long!



Make your own lunch kits using reusable containers with sections!

Ideas for packing tasty and healthy choices:

Vegetables and Fruit

Fresh, frozen and canned are all good options!

- Carrot
- Tomato
- Lettuce, Spinach
- Broccoli, Cauliflower
- Sweet bell peppers
- Cucumber
- Turnip
- Celery
- Banana
- Berries
- Orange
- Apple
- Cantaloupe
- Peaches
- Raisins



Grain Products

- Whole grain bread, roll, or English muffin
- Whole grain flat bread like pita, tortilla or naan
- Whole grain crackers
- Brown or wild rice
- Popcorn
- Whole grain, low sugar breakfast cereals



Milk and Alternatives

- Plain white milk
- Yogurt
- Cheese cubes or strings (assorted variety such as cheddar, mozzarella, swiss, parmesan etc.)
- Homemade milk pudding
- Fortified soy beverage



Meat and Alternatives

- Cooked chicken, turkey, beef or pork
- Egg
- Hummus or bean dip
- Sunflower or pumpkin seeds
- Tuna or salmon
- Baked beans
- Wild game





Cut sandwiches or wraps into smaller pieces. Children usually like "finger foods".

Super Lunch Suggestions

- A thermos of chili, whole wheat dinner roll, slice of cheddar cheese, washed grapes and water
- Turkey on whole grain bread with lettuce and tomato, yogurt, blueberries and water
- Mini pizza (English muffin, sauce, vegetables such as peppers and onion and meat such as chicken or ground beef), canned peaches and milk
- Leftover meat and vegetables on a whole grain tortilla with cheddar cheese, a fruit cup and water
- Homemade chicken and vegetables soup, bread sticks, homemade vanilla pudding and a banana

Don't Forget the Veggies & Fruit

Children do not get enough vegetables and fruit. To help them get enough, include vegetables and fruit at every meal and snack! Canned and frozen vegetables and fruit have the same nutritional value as fresh.

Vegetables and fruit have a positive impact on health and are a key element in human development; it helps people get enough vitamins, minerals and other nutrients, reduces the risk of chronic disease and contributes to overall health and vitality.



What About Desserts?

Foods from Canada's Food Guide are great to pack for a tasty treat. Try fresh, frozen or canned fruit in different ways. You can have them whole, chunked, as a kabob or topped with yogurt and granola or chia seeds. Whatever way they are delicious and packed with nutrients!



FRESH

FROZEN

CANNED

All Good Options!

Don't Forget Snacks!



Children need a lot of nutrients to support growth. Make sure to include enough food in your child's lunch bag for at least one healthy snack each day.

Try these tasty ideas!

Pair any of these with a **fruit or vegetable** choice to make a tasty, healthy snack.

- ✓ Air-popped popcorn
- ✓ Whole grain mini muffins
- ✓ Unsalted sunflower or pumpkin seeds
- ✓ Cheese cubes and whole grain crackers
- ✓ Hummus
- ✓ Yogurt

Snacks to keep out of your lunch bag

- ✗ Potato chips, corn chips and cheese puffs
- ✗ Candies and chocolate bars
- ✗ Chocolate or yogurt dipped granola bars
- ✗ Cakes, pastries and cookies
- ✗ Cream filled or chocolate cookies
- ✗ Chewy fruit flavoured snacks

Make Your Own Snack Mix

Mix together:

- Cereal that has two or more grams of fibre and nine or less grams of sugar
- Dried fruit
- Pumpkin seeds
- Sunflower seeds
- Unsalted pretzels



Keep in a large container and use as needed when packing lunches and snacks.

What's to Drink?

It's important to stay hydrated, but choose beverages wisely. Sugary drinks often provide little or no nutrition and take the place of healthier beverages like water and white milk.

Choose every day:

- ✓ Water
- ✓ Plain white milk (2%, 1%, 0.5% or skim)
- ✓ Plain fortified soy beverage

Limit:

- ▲ 100% unsweetened fruit juice (limit to ½ cup [125 mL] serving per day)
- ▲ Chocolate milk
- ▲ Flavoured fortified soy beverage

Avoid:

Highly sugar sweetened beverages such as:

- ✗ Sports drinks
- ✗ Soda Pop
- ✗ Energy drinks
- ✗ Fruit drink, punches or cocktails
- ✗ Iced tea
- ✗ Flavoured or vitamin water
- ✗ Ice slushy drinks and milk shakes



For more information contact your local Public Health Nurse or Regional Nutritionist

Adapted from Region of Waterloo Public Health