

# Packing Food

for the School Day

**Fibre and protein**  
are the perfect pair

**Meal prep tips!**





Eating well gives kids the nutrition and energy that they need to learn, play, and grow. Offer your child a variety of foods every day.

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# Packing food for the school day

Most children have about 20 minutes to wash their hands and eat during breaks. To give your child enough time to eat, if possible:

- wash and peel fruits ahead of time,
- cut food into bite-sized pieces, and
- use easy to open containers.

Encourage your child to eat their food in the order they prefer.

## How much should I pack?



It is important to let your child guide how much food to pack. **Their appetite is a very good indicator of how much food their body needs.**

Start by packing about half the total amount of food your child needs in one day, from morning to bedtime. If your child tells you they are still hungry, pack more.

Your child's appetite can vary - they may eat a little some days and a lot other days. Encourage them to listen to their body and eat the amount they prefer each day. Don't punish or criticize them for not finishing what was packed.

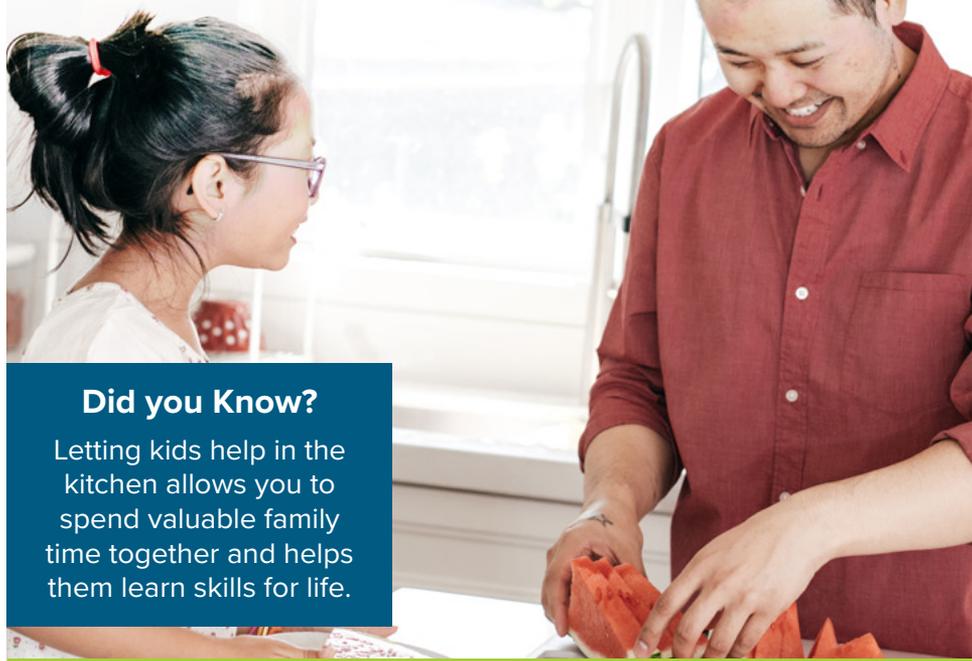
If the same foods keep coming back uneaten, talk with your child about why.

# Packing food your child will eat

Your child is the expert on what they like to eat. Talk to your child about their food likes and dislikes. Encourage them to help choose what goes in their lunches and snacks.

Ask your child to help you make the grocery list and shop for those items together.

Kids are more likely to eat lunches and snacks they help make. Younger kids can wash veggies or fruit and help put food in containers. Older kids can help peel or cut food.



## Did you Know?

Letting kids help in the kitchen allows you to spend valuable family time together and helps them learn skills for life.

# Make ahead meal prep tips

- 1 On weekends, make extra of your child's favourite muffins, pancakes, or waffles and freeze them. Pack with fruit and yogurt for a simple school meal or snack!
- 2 Slice veggies and fruit ahead of time and put them in containers. Pack with your child's favourite dip – try hummus, salsa, ranch, or yogurt dip.
- 3 Plan for leftovers. Soups, stews, chili, and casserole recipes can be doubled and frozen in individual portion sizes for easy lunch options.
- 4 Make smoothies ahead of time and freeze them in drink containers. This can act as an ice pack until it is thawed and ready to drink.



# Pack it up!

## Mix and match



To keep your child full and satisfied, try to include foods from all 3 food groups for meals and at least 2 food groups for snacks. Choose foods your child likes and can eat in the time they have.

**Meal:** 3 food groups

**Snack:** at least 2 food groups

### Vegetables and fruit



Vegetable sticks



Bell peppers



Avocado



Apple slices



Cucumber slices



Melon



Cherry Tomatoes



Grapes



Snap peas



Banana



Salad



Unsweetened apple sauce



Unsweetened dried fruit



Vegetable soup



Berries



## Whole grains



Tortilla



Oatmeal



Bagel



Pasta



Crackers



Brown rice



Pancakes



English muffin



Pita



Dry cereal

## Protein foods



Hard boiled egg



Hummus



Trail mix



Seed butter



Beans



Leftover meats  
(chicken, beef, or  
turkey)



Fish



Edamame



Canned tuna



Sunflower seeds



Milk



Cheese



Yogurt



Soy milk



Cottage cheese

# Inspiration and ideas



Try to include at least one veggie and one fruit, a whole grain, and a protein food.



**Bento  
box**



Encourage children to get creative and choose their favourite pizza toppings.



**Mini  
pizza**



Top with fruit, seeds, or spices like cinnamon.



**Oatmeal**



Beans and veggies add variety to pasta salad and will help keep your child full.



### Pasta salad

Add shredded carrots, sliced peppers, or fresh herbs for a pop of colour.

Add leftover meat, cooked or fresh veggies, and shredded cheese to a pita.



### Pita pocket

Pack “wet” ingredients like tomatoes and cucumbers separately so the pita doesn’t get soggy.

Let your child build a delicious and filling wrap by packing veggies, a spread, and a protein food along with a tortilla.



### Whole grain wrap

Include at least two food groups for snacks. Try fresh, frozen, or canned fruit with yogurt or sliced veggies with hummus.



### Snacks

# Thirst quenching

Staying hydrated can help keep your child ready to learn throughout the day.

Make water your child's drink of choice by sending a reusable water bottle with them to school every day.

Try offering plain white milk or unsweetened fortified soy beverage (soy milk) as part of your child's protein foods each day.

Encourage your child to rinse with water after drinking other drinks. This can help to wash away sugars and reduce the risk of cavities.



# Make it green

Think about the environment when packing food for your child's school day.

When possible, opt for reusable sandwich or snack bags or containers, and pack reusable utensils in their lunch bag. Try to avoid single-use items like plastic wrap or aluminum foil.

When buying packaged foods, minimize waste by choosing foods that come in larger packages instead of being individually wrapped.



# Introducing new foods

As children try new foods and new flavours, their tastes can change from one day to the next. It can take 10 or more tries before a child learns to accept new food. They may also eat a food one day and reject it the next. Keep offering new foods without pressure and let them see you enjoying the same foods.



## Tips for introducing new foods:

Serve new food with old favourites. Try to have at least one thing you know they like to eat at meals or snacks.

To reduce food waste, start by offering small amounts of new foods.

Offer but don't pressure. Let your child decide if they want to smell, lick, or take a bite.

Offer the same food in different ways (e.g., shredded carrots in a tortilla one day, sliced carrots with dip another day).



# Keeping it safe

Use these tips to keep foods at the right temperature. Don't leave food out at room temperature for longer than 2 hours.

Even if a food or drink looks and smells fine, it can still contain enough bacteria to make your child sick. Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold, and throw out foods that come back home at the end of the day.

## Hot

Use an insulated lunch bag.

A stainless steel insulated jar or bottle will keep foods hot for several hours.

Fill the jar or bottle with boiling water and let it stand for a few minutes, empty the water, and then add the hot food.

Wrap a cloth around the jar or bottle for extra insulation. Your child can also use it as a napkin.

## Cold

Use an insulated lunch bag.

Include freezer packs or frozen drinks like smoothies. They will keep other things cold as they thaw.

Refrigerate sandwiches, wraps, and salads overnight and put them straight into your child's lunch bag in the morning.

## Keep it clean!

Wash your hands with soap and scrub for 20 seconds before you start making food.

Fresh veggies and fruit should always be washed, even if you aren't going to eat the peel.

Wash utensils, containers, and your child's water bottle in hot, soapy water at the end of each day and let them air dry.

