



Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH AND
EMERGENCY SERVICES

School Lunch Your Kids Will Munch



Kids who eat well, learn better!

Eating a variety of healthy choices as recommended by **Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide** can help children to be more alert and ready to learn. Studies show that children who eat healthier perform better at school.

What to include in a healthy school lunch

Include at least one choice from each food group in Canada's Food Guide. Involve your child in planning their lunch. They have probably learned about Canada's Food Guide in class!

Follow these easy steps:

1. Start with a **Meat or Meat Alternative**; for example, sliced lean meat, a hard-cooked egg, tuna salad or bean dip.
2. Add a **Grain Product** such as whole grain bread, crackers or pita.
3. Don't forget to include a **Vegetable or Fruit!**
4. Pack **Milk or Milk Alternatives** like milk, cheese, yogurt or fortified soy beverage to balance out the meal.

If desired, add a dessert. Healthy options include: fruit, homemade whole grain muffin, or yogurt.

If your child has more than one nutrition break during the school day, you can divide the food into a meal and a snack or into two smaller meals. It may be helpful to label, colour code or separate the food planned for each nutrition break within the lunch bag.

Tips for packing and handling a safe school lunch

- Use an insulated lunch bag and a thermos to keep cold food cold and hot food hot. Warm the thermos with boiling water before filling it with steaming hot food.
- Include a freezer pack to help keep lunches cold.
- Wash all vegetables and fruit before packing.
- Do not re-send sandwiches or hot food. Fruit and other snacks can be safely repacked. Do not re-use wrappings.
- Wash reusable beverage 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. Keep portions small for younger children with smaller appetites. Whenever possible, peel fruit and cut up food into smaller bite-sized pieces.



Make Your Own “Lunch Kits”

Kids often want fun, packaged food products they see on TV or in their friends’ lunches. When in a hurry pre-packaged kits may seem convenient. But, store bought lunch kits are high in salt, sugar and saturated fat and low in fibre. These products 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:

Grain Products

- Whole grain bagels, wraps, pitas, breads, buns, muffins or crackers
- Brown or wild rice
- Whole grain pasta
- Whole grain cereal lower in sugar

Milk and Alternatives

- Cheese strings, cubes or slices
- Plain milk or fortified soy beverage
- Yogurt (plain or fruit-flavoured)

Vegetables and Fruit

- Carrot, celery or turnip sticks
- Strips of sweet pepper
- Slices of cucumber
- Cherry tomatoes
- Broccoli or cauliflower flowerets

Meat and Alternatives

- Canned light tuna or salmon
- Cubes or slices of leftover chicken, turkey, pork or beef
- Hard-cooked egg
- Hummus or bean dip
- Sunflower or pumpkin seeds*

* Nuts and seeds may be a choking risk for children under four years of age.

Yummy!

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 Waterloo Region. Many schools have banned food 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 in your child’s classroom.

Super Sandwich Suggestions

Avoid the sandwich slump!
Here are a few fresh ideas...

Base (Grain Product)

- Whole grain mini pita pockets
- Whole grain bread or bagel
- Whole grain wraps
- Whole grain roll or mini submarine bun

Filling (Meat or Alternative)

- Hummus or bean spread
- Egg salad, tuna salad or chicken salad
- Grilled chicken slices
- Turkey or roast beef

Topper (Vegetables, Fruit and Milk Products)

- Leafy greens such as lettuce, kale, arugula or spinach
- Sliced tomato, cucumber or green pepper
- Grated carrots
- Sliced hard cheese

Cut sandwiches or wraps into smaller pieces.
Children usually like “finger foods” that can be easily picked up and eaten in two small bites.



Veggies and Fruit on the Go!

Include a vegetable and fruit at every meal and snack each day to help children get enough vegetables and fruit. For the best value, buy local produce when it is in season. Save unsweetened packaged fruit for days when you run out of fresh fruit.



Don't forget Snacks!

Children need a lot of nutrients to support growth. Pack at least one snack in your child's lunch bag each day.

Try these lip-smacking ideas!

- Broccoli "trees" and red pepper rings with hummus
- Cheese cubes and whole grain crackers
- Peach chunks with plain yogurt
- Whole grain mini muffins and apple slices

Snacks to avoid:

- Potato chips, corn chips and cheese puffs
- Candies and chocolate bars
- Granola bars with marshmallows, candy or chocolate
- Cakes, pastries and cookies
- Chewy fruit snacks



Pack Healthy Drinks

Choose everyday:

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

Choose sometimes:

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

Avoid:

- Sports drinks
- Pop/diet pop
- Energy drinks
- Fruit drinks, punches or cocktails
- Iced tea



Ask your child's school principal or teacher if students are allowed to have a water bottle at their desk.

For more information call EatRight Ontario at 1-877-510-5102 or visit www.eatrightontario.ca