



Public Health

Balanced Lunches for the Balanced School Day

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The Balanced School Day has two scheduled nutrition and exercise breaks for students. This replaces the traditional lunch and two recess periods. One break is in the morning; the other is in the afternoon. Each lasts about 20 minutes.

It can be a challenge for you to plan and organize your child's lunch bag for the Balanced School Day. Here are tips to help you pack:

Make it healthy

For each break, pack at least three of the four food groups listed in Canada's Food Guide. These include Vegetables and Fruit, Grain Products, Milk Products, and Meat and Alternatives.

Few children get enough vegetables and fruit each day. Try to include one of each every day. The best choice for nutrition and cost is produce that's grown locally.

Let your kids know that unhealthy snacks—such as most granola bars and baked goods—are “sometimes foods” and not the best choices for every day. Pack tasty snacks that are also nutritious, such as milk-based puddings (package shows milk or skim milk powder as a first ingredient), homemade banana muffins or oatmeal cookies, frozen yogurt, or air-popped popcorn. Pack a drink for each break. Water and low-fat milk are the best choices. Avoid fruit drinks, sports drinks, and energy drinks. Limit 100% fruit juice to one serving per day. Whole fruit is much healthier.

Think two-for-one

Keep the two breaks in mind when packing your child's lunch. A lunch bag with two compartments works well: Fill one section with foods for the first break, and fill the other for the second break. You can mark “1” or “2”— for first break and second break— on re-usable containers or insert a divider in the lunch bag.



Brush with nature

Be sure to pack crunchy vegetables and fruit such as carrot sticks and apples, or a piece of cheese. If your child eats them at the end of a Nutrition Break they can act like nature's toothbrush. Also encourage your children to rinse with water after eating to help prevent cavities. Avoid dried fruit and fruit-snacks candy. These stick to teeth and cause decay.

Keep hands clean

Remind your child to clean his or her hands before eating with soap and warm water or hand sanitizer.

Watch portion size

Children on the balanced school-day timetable need the same amount of food during the day as other children. Be sure not to pack two full lunches. Cut sandwiches in half and wrap them separately. Your child can eat one half at each break.

Be temperature wise

Foods packed in a Thermos may be hotter, safer, and tastier if they are eaten

during the first break. Pre-warm the Thermos by filling with hot water before adding the hot food.

You may want to try out the Thermos at home first, before sending it to school with your child. Make sure perishable food stays cold until lunchtime by using a freezer pack or frozen juice box. Cold foods like juice, water bottles, and yogourt can be frozen to help them stay cold until the second break.

1st Nutrition Break	2nd Nutrition Break
Monday 1/2 sliced turkey sandwich on whole wheat Clementine Water	Monday Other 1/2 sliced turkey sandwich or leftover cold chicken Green/red pepper rings Milk
Tuesday 1/2 whole-wheat tortilla with salsa and shredded cheese Yogourt Pineapple chunks Water	Tuesday Other 1/2 whole-wheat tortilla with salsa and shredded cheese or boiled egg Zucchini bread Cucumber slices Milk
Wednesday Banana muffin Applesauce Cheese and whole-grain crackers Water	Wednesday Pasta salad with veggies Boiled egg Milk
Thursday 1/2 pumpernickel bagel with cheese Grapes 100% fruit juice	Thursday Other 1/2 pumpernickel bagel with cheese or minestrone soup in Thermos Carrot/celery sticks Oatmeal cookie Milk
Friday Sunflower/pumpkin seeds Cheese string Cherry tomatoes Water	Friday Pizza day Pear Milk