



IT'S SCHOOL TIME... Packing Safe and Nutritious Lunches for School-Age Children

Selecting the lunchbox...

Lunch is more than a sandwich or hot entrée! Beverages, fruits and vegetables, snacks and desserts are also packed. Choose from a variety of soft-sided or hard-plastic insulated lunchboxes.

Consider...

- size
- good insulation
- ease of cleaning
- ease of opening
- weight

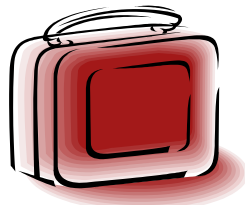


For snacks, choose from smaller insulated boxes or soft-sided sacks. For lunches, these smaller boxes are a challenge for kids and their parents to pack and repack for the trip home.

Overall Recommendation...

For lunches, purchase either a hard-sided or soft-sided well-insulated 5-quart lunchbox that:

- is well made.
- is easy to pack.
- does not limit food choices.
- has room for chill pack, beverage and extra snack.
- is lightweight (2 to 2½ pounds packed).
- has a water-resistant or water-proof lining.
- does not have exposed seams.



Remember:

Keep bacteria in check...

Keep foods below 40°F or above 140°F.

You can't see them, smell them or taste them, but they can make you or your children sick!

And no, it's not the flu! It's foodborne illness, commonly called food poisoning. The typical cause is large numbers of harmful bacteria or the poisons they produce.

Bacteria multiply rapidly in warm, moist food. They grow best between **40** and **140°F**. This temperature range is the **DANGER ZONE**. Most foods can safely be held within the **DANGER ZONE** for up to 2 hours. That 2 hour period includes preparation time.

Packing the Lunchbox...

Be Sure...

- frozen beverages will thaw by lunch.
- your child can open containers and remove any packaging.
- your child can peel an uncut fruit.
- your child can easily open, repack and close the lunchbox.

KEEP HOT FOODS HOT!

For soups, chili, spaghetti and other hot favorites...use preheated vacuum bottles to keep foods **above 140°F**.

Foods can only be held in the **DANGER ZONE** up to 2 hours... including preparation time.

KEEP COLD FOODS COLD!

Pack meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products and other perishable foods... with a solidly frozen chill pack or frozen individual juice box to keep foods **below 40°F**.

Nutrition Tips

Lunches should meet the Dietary Guidelines. Read labels to find foods that are lower in fat, sodium and added sugar and a good source of whole grains.



For lunch, try to include:

- **Grains *** (2 to 3 ounces)
1 ounce or 1 serving is equal to:
 - 1 slice bread, dinner roll, waffle
 - ½ hamburger bun, English muffin, bagel
 - 5 to 7 pretzels or crackers
 - 3 square Graham crackers
 - 1 cup unsweetened or lightly sweetened ready-to-eat cereals

**At least ½ of the servings for the day should be whole grains*
- **Vegetables and Fruits** (1 to 2 cups)
½ cup or 1 serving raw, cooked, or canned fruit or vegetable is equal to:
 - 1 small apple or banana
 - 4 to 5 strawberries
 - 5 to 6 baby carrots or pepper strips
 - 4 oz. 100% juice
- **Milk and Milk products** (1 serving)
1 serving is equal to:
 - 1 c. fat free or low-fat milk or yogurt
 - 1 ½ oz. low-fat cheese
- **Meat and Beans** (2 to 3 ounces)
1 ounce or 1 serving is equal to:
 - 1 oz. lean meat, poultry, fish
 - 1 egg
 - 1 Tbsp. peanut or other seed/nut butter
 - ½ oz. peanuts, or other nuts or seeds
 - ¼ cup cooked dried beans or peas

It is okay if:

- **Not all food groups are packed daily.**
Just be sure that adequate amounts from all food groups are consumed throughout the day.
- **Some high-fat, high-added sugar items are included occasionally.**
Just balance these choices with low-fat, low-added sugar companions.
- **Your child doesn't eat everything.**
Just pack an array of nutritious items from which he/she can choose.
- **Your child eats less than his/her friends.**
Calorie needs vary with the child.
- **Your child wants to eat only one food.**
This is common. If the food selected is nutritious and milk or juice is also consumed, don't worry about a short-term nutritional lapse.
- **Your child refuses to eat food popular at home, or requests foods that he/she has refused to eat at home.**
It's likely due to the influence of other children. Don't worry about single choices so much as his/her overall diet.
- **Your child eats everything one day and almost nothing the next.**
Changes in appetite are common. Children usually balance their calorie intake over several days. As long as growth is normal, don't worry about daily variations in amounts of food eaten.



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