



Encouraging good nutrition in children is one of the best ways to ensure long-term good health. Habits learned in childhood set the stage for a lifetime of healthy eating.

? WHAT'S for

LUNCH

Make Lunches Fun and Easy

Try making lunch preparation a joint effort. Children are more likely to eat a meal that they have been involved in creating.

Teach kids about the four food groups in Canada's Food Guide, and encourage them to include choices from each group in their lunch box every day.

Younger children generally prefer meals that are simple and easy to eat. Finger food is always a hit! Cut sandwiches and vegetables into fun shapes.

Use a wide-mouth thermos to keep soup or pasta warm for lunch, or to keep smoothies and fruit cold. To keep foods warm, pre-heat the thermos with hot water before filling it.

Children's tastes can be fickle. Rather than giving up the first time your child rejects a new food item, expect to try a few times. The more often kids see new foods, the more likely they are to try them.

Dress up your lunch box or paper lunch bag with stickers, handwritten notes, or even the occasional toy to make every lunch a surprise.

Check your child's lunch box at the end of every day. Ask what he or she liked or didn't like. Maybe there are healthy foods that other children have brought to school that you could try.

Over 50% of cancers are preventable! A balanced approach to good nutrition and physical activity leads to better long-term health and reduces the risk of many diseases, including the risk of many cancers.

Why is a healthy lunch important?

On an average day, your child may consume up to one third of his or her calories at school. Nutritious, well-balanced lunches and snacks provide the fuel children need to stay alert and energized along with the nutrients they need to grow and stay healthy.

A good starting point for healthy eating is Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide. You can find the complete guide at www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide. The Guide contains four essential food groups: Vegetables and Fruit, Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives, and Meat and Alternatives. A balanced diet that includes a variety of foods from these groups will give your child the energy needed to work and play, along with the nutrients that keep young bodies healthy and strong.

FURTHER READING

For tips, tools, and more information on healthy nutrition for children:

ActNow BC
www.actnowbc.ca

BC Cancer Agency
www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/prevention

Dial-A-Dietitian
www.dialadietitian.org

Dietitians of Canada
www.dietitians.ca



BC Cancer Agency

CARE + RESEARCH

An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

Prevention Programs

Sugar is Not So Sweet

Kids need carbohydrates for energy, but foods high in simple sugar often have many calories that provide little other nutrition. Too many sugar-rich foods can contribute to weight gain. Having a healthy weight reduces the risk of many cancers

Kid-friendly Fats

Children need fats for good health. Some higher fat foods such as seeds, nuts, fatty fish, and vegetable oils are healthy and should be eaten in small quantities daily. But a diet too high in fat can lead to obesity. High-fat foods such as cake, chips, chocolate, cookies, or french fries should be eaten less often.



Cut Down on Salt

Many packaged and processed foods and drinks contain high amounts of salt (sodium). Too much salt is related to health problems such as high blood pressure and heart disease. Choosing fresh or unprocessed frozen foods more often will help decrease your child's salt intake. There is no need to add salt to your child's food.



Keep these options on hand for quick healthy snacks:

- **dried fruit (such as apricots, apples, or raisins)**
- **nuts and seeds (such as almonds or sunflower seeds)**
- **single serving, low-fat yogurts**

Sandwich Subs

Take the centre out of the sandwich and serve these protein packs on their own:

- Hummus (ground chick pea spread) or other bean spreads
- Sliced or cubed turkey or chicken
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Cooked tofu chunks
- Tinned or fresh salmon or tuna
- Low-fat cheese or cottage cheese

Crunch at Lunch!

Bite into at least two of the following A to Z tasty treats at lunch and snack time (kids need 5 or 6 daily servings).

- Apple
- Banana
- Blueberries
- Broccoli
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Cherry tomatoes
- Cucumber
- Edamame (cooked soybeans)
- Grapes
- Green beans
- Mini corn
- Red pepper
- Strawberries
- Pear
- Peas
- Zucchini

Some kids like to munch frozen treats such as peas, cooked soybeans, or corn. Put these snacks in the lunch box with a reusable ice pack to retain their frozen crispness.

CONSIDER CONDIMENTS

You can unknowingly double the calories in a sandwich or salad by using high-fat sweetened 'extras' such as regular mayonnaise, butter, and salad dressing. Opt for these flavour boosters instead:

- **Low-fat mayonnaise or salad dressing**
- **Fresh herbs**
- **Mustard**
- **Vinaigrette**
- **Hummus**
- **Salsa**



Q Fruit drinks are better than sports drinks and soda, right?

A Not always. Many drinks with the word 'fruit' on the label contain mostly sugar and water. Read the product name; those labelled 'drink', 'blend', 'cocktail', or 'beverage' are not recommended as part of a healthy lunch. Instead:

- Although Canada's Food Guide considers 1/2 cup (125 ml) of 100% fruit juice to be a serving of fruit or vegetables, it also suggests you eat **fresh** vegetables and fruit more often than drinking juice.
- Fill up a water bottle for your child every day. You can flavour it with lime or lemon juice, or sugar-free syrup.
- Blend your favorite fruits and freeze them in ice trays. Pop one into an insulated cup or thermos in the morning; by lunchtime, your child will have a delicious melted smoothie.

be allergy aware

The most common foods to cause severe allergic reactions include peanuts and shellfish. Because children sometimes share food, you should know if any of your child's classmates are allergic so you can decide whether to avoid these foods.

Fibre Fillers

Whole grains provide fibre and other nutrients. Whole grains include barley, brown rice, corn, rye, oats, sprouted grains, and whole wheat. Enriched white flour and unbleached flour are low in fibre. You can add fibre to your child's diet by buying or making whole grain versions of these foods:

- Bread
- Bagels
- Pita pockets
- Flatbread
- Crackers
- Tortillas
- Bread sticks
- English muffins
- Naan bread
- Pancakes
- Waffles
- Rice cakes
- Unsweetened dry cereal
- Granola
- Oat cakes
- Pasta