

Keeping Lunches Safe

Keep children's food safe by following these simple guidelines.

- Make sure to wash hands with soap and running water before preparing food.
- Always prepare food using clean equipment and a clean, sanitized work area.
- Use clean plastic containers or Ziploc bags.
- Chill foods to be kept cold before packing with a freezer pack.
- Add a freezer pack to keep foods cold until lunch. Use commercial gel packs, ice cubes in a leak-proof container, or frozen juice box.
- Remember that during field trips, refrigeration may not be available. Pack non-perishable items if possible.
- For children under 4, modify foods to prevent choking.

Examples of foods that must be kept cold:

- Sliced meat sandwich
- Tuna, egg, or chicken salad
- Milk, soft cheeses, or yogurt
- Cooked vegetables or fruits
- Cut melons
- Pasta or rice dishes
- Most other perishables taken from the refrigerator

Examples of foods don't need to stay cold:

- Cookies, crackers, or chips
- Breads and cereals
- Fresh fruit in the peel
- Canned fruit or vegetables
- Canned pudding or applesauce
- Hard & cream cheese



Note to Parents and Caregivers:

The most recent Washington State rules outlining meals and snack for children in licensed child care require offering specific food groups. These include a serving of food from each of the following groups:

Lunch

- ◆ Milk or a suitable milk substitute
(Whole for children 12—24 mo.)
(Low fat for children over 24 mo.)
- ◆ Fruit and Vegetable
- ◆ Protein (meat or meat alternate)
- ◆ Grain

Snacks

Choose foods from 2 different groups



Lunch and Snack Ideas for Preschoolers

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Packing a Healthy Lunch

Lunches and snacks from the home kitchen can add an element of delightful surprise for your child care. They can include safe and healthy foods that remind your child of home. Lunches should contain the following foods as outlined in the Washington State Meal Pattern for Child Care:

- **1 serving of a grain food—consider whole wheat bread or brown rice crackers!**
- **1 serving each of a vegetable and fruit**
- **1 serving of meat or a meat alternate, i.e. turkey and cheese slices, hardboiled eggs, bean dip, fried tofu square, nut butters, nuts, trail mix bag w/nuts and seeds, yogurt (less than 23 gms of added sugar per 6 oz serving)**
- **1 - 6 oz container of low fat milk or suitable milk substitute—soy, rice, almond should be fortified with vitamin D.**

Tips for Successful Lunch Box Meals

- Include only one new food at a time in the lunchbox
- If possible, involve the child in packing the lunch
- Pack something crisp, something chewy, something colorful
- To reduce waste, invest in reusable plastic containers and wash/sanitize it daily
- Remember to pack child-sized utensils and cups - whatever is needed for the child to be able to eat the foods you have packed
- If beverages are not included with lunch, provide a small container of low fat/ flavored milk, 100% fruit juice, or bottled water
- Insert a note in the child's lunch that says **"I Love You!"**

Creative Lunch Ideas

Sandwiches (1/2 sandwich)
(Try whole wheat bread)
Tuna fish
Chicken/turkey/egg salad
Toasted cheese w/tomato slice
Deli lunch meats/cheese with shredded lettuce



Sandwich Substitutes

Soba or linguini noodles w/shredded veggies
Cheese, lunch meat, crackers, or bagel chips
Pita bread with humus or egg salad
Tortilla chips with bean dip and salsa
Tortilla with cream cheese
Mini bagel with cheese, turkey, lettuce, tomato

Vegetables

 (1/4 cup)

Thin sliced carrot sticks
Celery w/cream cheese
Broccoli/cauliflower pieces
Cucumber slices
Zucchini rounds
Half of ear of corn
Jicama/radishes
Steamed asparagus spears
Avocado quarters
Small container of salad dressing for dipping
Salsa (w/chips)

Invest in small, plastic containers for fruit/veggies, dipping sauces, and salad dressings

Fruit

 (1/4 cup or 1/2 a piece)

Apple, pear, plum
Banana
Berries (fresh or frozen)
Peach/nectarine
Melon slices
Orange sections
Kiwi or mango chunks
Fruit cocktail
Applesauce container
Grapes (red and green)
100% fruit juice container (6 oz) on occasion



Meat & Alternates

 (Hot - 1/3 – 1/2 cup)

Deli slices (1 1/2 oz) - turkey, chicken, ham
Hummus (2 Tbsp) or bean dips/spreads (1/4 cup)
Tuna, chicken, meat salads (1 1/2—2oz of filling)
Hard boiled egg (1 egg)
Fried tofu sticks (1 oz)
Trail mix w/sunflower or pumpkin seeds
Cheese or cheese sticks (1 oz slice)
Cottage cheese (3/4 cup)
Container of yogurt (6 oz)
♦ Gogurts are high in sugar and less than 3 oz

Salads

 (1/2 cup)

Mixed fruit chunks
Potato salad
Coleslaw
Rice balls/sushi
Chopped lettuce/spinach, dressing on side
Lettuce wraps w/tuna or chicken salad

Hint: Dip fresh fruit in orange juice to keep it looking fresh!

Liquid Milk— include with breakfast and lunch

6 oz carton of milk or suitable milk substitute
Some plant beverages are well accepted
♦ Soy, rice, almond, coconut, pea
♦ Avoid sugar sweetened versions
♦ Ensure they are fortified with vitamin D and a good source of calcium



Microwave Meals

 (1/2—3/4 cup) (Leftovers)

Pizza w/sliced meat/veggies
Chili with beans
Chicken drumette or leg
Baked potato w/cheese
Ham and potatoes au gratin
Pasta w/sauce or lasagna
Stir fry w/ veggies
Stew/homemade soup
Refried rice w/chopped chicken and veggies

Beware of pre-packaged lunch products with high fat, high salt, and low nutritional value.