Lunch and Snack Ideas for Preschoolers

Modify foods which may cause choking. Cut grapes and large berries smaller than 1/2". Make vegetable sticks small and narrow. Avoid hot dogs.

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 zip-loc 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.

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
### 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
- Cheese, lunch meat, crackers, or bagel chips
- Pita bread with hummus or egg salad
- Tortilla chips with bean dip and salsa
- Tortilla with cream cheese
- Mini bagel with cheese, turkey, lettuce and 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)

### Meat & Alternates (Hot - 1/3 – 1/2 cup)
- Deli slices (1 1/2 oz) - turkey, chicken, ham
- Hummus (2 Tbsp)
- 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

### Salads (1/2 cup)
- Mixed fruit chunks
- Potato salad
- Coleslaw
- Rice balls/sushi
- Lettuce/spinach dressing on side
- Mixed beans w/dressing
- Noodles w/shredded carrots, pea pods, broccoli

### Dairy
- 1/2 pint carton of milk (8 oz)
- 1 oz slice of cheese or cheese sticks
- 6 oz container of yogurt
- 3/4 cup cottage cheese

### Microwave Meals (1/2—3/4 cup) (Leftovers)
- Pizza w/sliced meat/veggies
- Chili with beans
- Chicken drummette or leg
- Baked potato w/grated cheese/ground meat
- Meatloaf or meat balls
- Ham and potatoes au gratin
- Pasta w/sauce or lasagna
- Stir fry
- Stew/homemade soup
- Refried rice w/chopped chicken and veggies

### 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
- Invest in small, plastic containers for fruit/veggies, dipping sauces, and salad dressings
- Hint: Dip fresh fruit in orange juice to keep it looking fresh!

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