

## Tips for Lunch Packers

*From: Calgary Health Services, Nutrition Division 228-7420 (10/93). Used with permission.*

Looking for new ideas to add some life to your lunch? The key is to choose a variety of foods...it's your key to good nutrition as well! Try to include something from each of the following four food groups from Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating: Grain Products, Vegetables and Fruit, Milk products, Meat and Alternatives.

Examples from each of the foods groups are listed below. Try to follow the tips in each food group for healthy eating.

<b>Grain products</b>  <i>Choose whole grain and enriched products more often</i>	<b>Vegetables and fruit</b>  <i>Choose dark green and orange vegetables and orange fruit more often</i>	<b>Milk Products</b>  <i>Choose lower-fat milk products more often</i>	<b>Meat and Alternatives</b>  <i>Choose leaner meats, poultry and fish, as well as dried peas, beans and lentils more often</i>
bread -whole-wheat, rye, -pumpnickel, oatmeal -raisin, fruit -onion,cheese -white buns bagel pita tortilla bannock english muffin whole grain or fruit muffin pancakes rice cakes crackers graham wafers bread sticks noodles/pasta rice cereals - hot or cold	fresh fruit in season: - apple, orange, banana -cantaloupe, grapes, pear, plum canned fruit: -applesauce, peaches, pears, pineapple vegetables - raw or cooked: - carrot, celery or turnip sticks -broccoli or cauliflower florets -mushrooms, cherry tomatoes -green pepper strips -cucumber or zucchini slices -radishes, onion -lettuce, alfalfa sprouts	milk: -white or chocolate -buttermilk cheese: -slices, grated, cubed -processed slices -cottage cheese yogurt: -plain -with fruit added -flavoured soups made with milk  milk puddings, tapioca	meats: -roast beef, pork, ham, lamb, meatloaf, wild game, luncheon meat poultry -chicken, turkey  fish: -canned tuna or salmon  hard boiled egg tofu  cooked dried peas, beans, lentils: -split pea soup, baked beans, hummus, lentil casseroles nuts or seeds -plain, roasted or ground, e.g., peanut butter

	dried fruit: -raisins, apricots fruit or vegetable juice		
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### Other Foods

Other foods and beverages that don't belong to one of the four food groups can add variety, taste and enjoyment to your meal. Examples are margarine, mustard, relishes, mayonnaise, salad dressings and so on. Some of these foods are higher in fat and/or calories, so use them less often.

### Helpful Hints

- Leftovers such as soup, stew, spaghetti sauce, macaroni and cheese, etc. can be frozen in small containers for use in lunches.
- Try wrapping lettuce wedges and other raw vegetables separately or placing them in their own containers to keep them fresh and crisp.
- Make everything as easy to eat as possible: cut a tomato into wedges, an orange into quarters, celery, carrots and turnips into sticks, cucumber or zucchini into slices, etc.
- Stock a selection of single-serving foods in easy-open or pull-top cans for emergency use. They go from the cupboard to the lunch box with no wrapping needed and can be eaten directly from the can. Choose from a variety of fruits and juices, baked beans, spaghetti with ground beef, several flavours of puddings and many other foods which are available in individual containers.
- When serving a raw fruit or vegetable, be sure they are thoroughly washed.
- Include a napkin; also a spoon or crackers when necessary.
- Don't forget to include a toothbrush (wrapped separately) and tooth paste in the bag or box.

### Tips for Children's Lunches

- Encourage children to help in the preparation of their own lunches, i.e., washing fruit.
- Cut sandwiches small for smaller children. Surprise them with sandwiches cut in distinctive shapes such as triangles, rectangles or stripes.

- Try crunchy ingredients in a filling such as celery or peanuts.
- When a beverage is given, a straw might be included.
- Arrange food in an attractive manner in the lunch box or bag. Place heavy items in the bottom and lighter or crushable items on top. If possible, arrange in such a manner that, at a glance, the child can see everything.
- Include a colourful item such as a napkin, a brightly coloured fruit or vegetable.
- Frequently place a surprise in the lunch box - a picture, a joke, a puzzle (depending on the child's age) or an item to use at school such as an eraser or pencil.

### **Food Safety**

Keep these food safety tips in mind to ensure that your lunch doesn't spoil:

Keep cold foods cold:

- Carry already chilled foods in an insulated lunch box or bag.
- Freeze your sandwich before packing it. Sandwiches made with peanut butter, sliced meat or poultry or those sandwiches made with mixtures that do not contain mayonnaise or hard cooked eggs freeze best. Pack the lettuce and tomatoes separately, and add them to your sandwich at lunchtime.
- Include a frozen ice pack or juice box.

Keep hot foods hot:

- Preheat a vacuum bottle - fill with hot water and let stand a minute or two. Empty and refill right away with hot food.

### Sample Lunch Packs

tortilla served with mashed kidney beans and salsa orange wedges milk	sliced chicken & sprouts in a bun cherry tomatoes banana milk
ham & cheese on rye bread unsweetened pineapple tidbits plain yogurt	egg filling in a bagel carrot & celery sticks milk
hummus with pita bread cucumber sticks unsweetened peaches plain yogurt	spaghetti with meat & tomato sauce mozzarella cheese cubes green pepper strips unsweetened fruit juice
green split pea soup breadsticks or crackers cheddar cheese slices apple wedges	lentil-rice casserole tomato juice milk pudding

NOTE: If no fluids are mentioned in the lunch, water should be provided. Remember to use insulated bottles when necessary to keep hot foods hot and cold food cold.