

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



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



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
- 1 serving each of a vegetable and fruit
- 1 serving of dairy
- 1 serving of meat or a meat alternate, i.e. beef, fish poultry, eggs, beans, bean dip, tofu, nut butters, nuts, or seeds

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

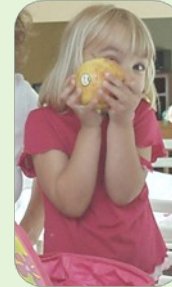
Cheese, lunch meat, crackers, or bagel chips
Pita bread with humus or egg salad
Tortilla chips with bean dip and salsa
Tortilla with cream cheese
Mini bagel with cheese, turkey, lettuce and tomato

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)

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)



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!

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 drumette 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

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