

Packing a healthy lunchbox



With the unpredictable nature of our day to day lives, preparing and packing a healthy lunchbox can be a difficult task. Finding time to shop and prepare interesting and healthy meals for school lunches can be stressful. Keep in mind, the foods we send to school with our kids can contribute up to **1/3 of their daily intake of nutrients**. So, it's important to pack a balanced lunch to ensure they're getting the nutrients they need.

Things you need to know:

Pack the core 4 + 1 for active kids

- Main Lunch
- Dairy
- Piece of fruit or all natural fruit cup
- Vegetables
- Extra snack for active kids

Keep "occasional" foods, such as chips, fruit snacks, cookies or juice, out of the lunch box. Although they can offer a practical, convenient solution for lunch boxes, they should not replace the core snack and should be kept for special occasions. Avoid including the ones with added sugars and opt for whole grain varieties packed full of whole foods you can see with your eyes.

Non-compliant foods are subject to being sent home in the lunch box.

Importance of the 5 food groups:

We always recommend thinking of each lunch box in terms of the five food groups and making sure they're all represented:

Dairy: the foods in this group are excellent sources of calcium, which is important for strong, healthy bones. Not many other foods in our diet contain as much calcium as dairy foods.

Fruit: fruit provides vitamins, minerals, dietary fiber and many phytonutrients (nutrients naturally present in plants), that help your body stay healthy.

Grains: always choose whole grain and/or high fiber varieties of breads, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, etc. Refined grain products (such as cakes or biscuits) can be high in added sugar, fat and sodium.

Protein: our body uses the protein we eat to make specialized chemicals such as hemoglobin and adrenalin. Protein also builds, maintains, and repairs the tissues in our body. Muscles and organs (such as your heart) are made of protein.

Vegetables and beans: vegetables should make up a large part of your daily food intake and should be encouraged at every meal (including snack times). They provide vitamins, minerals, dietary fiber and phytonutrients (nutrients naturally present in plants) to help your body stay healthy.

Food Suggestions for each food group:

Dairy	Fruit	Grains	Protein	Vegetables
Yogurt	Kiwi	Whole wheat bread	Edamame (soybean)	Beans
Cottage Cheese	Apple	Whole oats bread	Sugar snap peas	Celery
Cubed Cheese	Banana	Bagel	Chicken	Carrots
String Cheese	Berries	Pretzels	Almonds	Lettuce
Sliced Cheese	Avocado	Tortilla	Sunflower seeds	Potato
Cream Cheese	Corn	Cereal – 5 grams of fiber	Peanuts	Sweet Potato
	Mixed Fruit Cup (no added sugars)	Flatbread	Boiled Egg	Cabbage
	Raisins	Pasta	Scrambled Eggs	Kale
	Cherries	Crackers	Peanut Butter	Cauliflower
	Raspberries	Pita	Almond Butter	Broccoli
	Oranges	English Muffin	Hummus	Beets
	Pineapple (no added sugars)	Rice Cakes	Beans	Spinach
	Tomatoes	Rice	Ham Slices	
	Cucumbers		Energy Balls	
	Peppers			
	Zucchini			
	Peas			

Important info from our teachers:

- Kids LOVE to DIP! Who doesn't? A great way to get them to eat their vegetables is to provide a hummus or guacamole dip. Single serve individual packs available at the grocery stores!
- Finger foods are fun for adults ... and even MORE fun for kids! Try to make a wrap and cut it up into spirals for kid approved "finger food!" Or even cutting their sandwich into fun shapes or quarters so it fits in their hands better.
- Please send food prepared as you'd like your child to eat it! For example, if your child can eat an apple whole, please send it whole. However, if they cannot have it whole, please cut it before it putting in their lunch box.
 - We would love to warm up your child's food if needed ... however, we have one microwave per classroom so anything that needs to be heated up longer than **45 seconds** will have to be made at home.
 - Food needing to be heated up should be in a microwave safe container.
 - RMA will provide milk, water, plates and utensils for each meal.
- Remember we are fostering independence at school so please send containers easy for the student to manage on their own. Twist off and snapping containers are manageable for this age group. This gives them great practice too!
- Let your child be involved in packing their lunch! Kids love to know what to expect and this is a great way to get them involved with their lunches and hear their feedback of what they like and don't like.