

# Tips for Healthy and Safe School Lunches

## Tips to Keep Lunches Safe

COVID-19 spreads through direct contact with the respiratory droplets of someone who is infected with the virus through their cough or sneeze. These droplets can spread up to 2-metres, or 6 feet. Although this is not considered the main way of transmission, it may be possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

Whether you are headed back to work or sending your children back to school, everyone can play their part by following good hand hygiene and food safety practices. Follow these food safety tips and recommendations for packing a lunch:

### Before you begin:

- Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use at least 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

### Clean and Disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

- Clean and disinfect kitchen counters and kitchen equipment prior to use.
- Every night, wash your child's lunch bag and containers with soap and water.

### Do not prepare food for others if you are sick.

### Other tips to keep a lunch safe:

- Wash all vegetables and fruit with cool running water.
- Store the lunch in the fridge until your child leaves for school.
- Use an insulated bag with a freezer pack.
- Add a frozen yogurt cup or tube, milk, or freeze drinking water to help keep food cool.
- Pack cold foods in a cold thermos.
- For hot foods, fill a thermos in the morning with hot water to preheat the thermos, then empty the water and fill thermos with food reheated to steaming hot.
- Foods that are not eaten during the school day should not be re-sent to school the next day (e.g., hot leftovers, sandwiches made with meat or cheese, and milk products).
- Do not re-use plastic wrap and Ziploc bags, as they can carry many germs.



Visit [www.ckpublichealth.com](http://www.ckpublichealth.com) for guidance on packing safe and healthy lunches for school.

# Tips for Packing a Healthy Lunch

In preparation, for the 2020-21 school year, you may be wondering if there are any changes to consider when preparing food for the school day.

In addition to keeping lunches safe, providing healthy and adequate nutrition is important for the development and health of children and youth.

As for tips on what to pack, there are a couple of items to consider that may be different from previous school years, but for the most part the guidelines are the same as before.



1. Pack enough water and other beverages so that your child can stay hydrated throughout the day. Each student will be required to bring their own drink bottle that is labeled, kept with them during the day and not shared. Some schools will have accessible refillable water bottle fountains, whereas others do not have this option. Packing a reusable water bottle with enough fluids will help ensure that your child stays hydrated throughout the day and eliminates the need to use the water foundation. In addition to water consider packing:

- Plain milk (1%, 2% or 3.25%) or fortified soy beverages (unsweetened).
- 100% Fruit or Vegetable Juice. Choose 100% pure juice for added nutrition. Keep in mind that juice (even 100%) contains sugar and should be consumed in moderation. 125 mL (1/2 cup) is one serving according to Canada's Food Guide. A healthier option is to eat the whole fruit and drink water to hydrate!

2. Pack a variety of food from each of the food groups in Canada's Food Guide. Choose whole grains, fruits and vegetables and protein foods. Aim to include vegetables or fruit for every meal and snack.

3. Involve your children and youth in choosing the food sent to school. The more they help, the more likely they are to eat the food that is packed. Other benefits include developing their food skills, they are more likely to try new foods and greater involvement with the process.

4. Pack food that your child can eat without help from others. In maintaining distance and to avoid others from handling the food items, prepare food at home in ready to eat, easy to open containers so that young children do not have difficulty eating their lunch items.

5. Label containers, bottles, lunch bags and reusable utensils with your child's name. It's common for items to go missing, you can avoid confusion by labeling items with permanent marker.

6. Pack food choices that are ready to eat and don't need to be reheated. There will be no access to appliances like microwaves, toasters or kettles at school.

For more information, visit Dietitians of Canada for [Quick and Easy Lunch Ideas](#).