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## Best bets for brown bag lunches

Packing a child's lunch does not guarantee they will eat it. Here are some fun and easy ideas to help children be interested in lunch!

- **Involve children when planning and preparing their lunches.** Children who help to plan and prepare their own lunches are more likely to eat what they take to school.
- **Think variety.** When planning and preparing your child's lunch try to pack a variety of foods from each of the four food groups every day. This helps children to meet their nutritional needs and to decrease boredom from eating the same foods day after day.
- **Keep them guessing with a variety of fruits and vegetables in different shapes and colours.** Pack some crinkle-cut raw veggies with a snack cup filled with yogurt dip, a fruit salad with cut-up apples or pears and bananas with a squirt of lemon-lime soda
- **Keep it simple.** Most children eat lunch quickly so they can spend more time playing with friends. So send easy to open packages, cut-up fruits and vegetables, finger sandwiches, and box beverages such as 100% fruit juices.
- Send **small portions.** Do not overwhelm your children with too much food. Pack small portions of a variety of foods from each of the four food groups.
- **Keep perishable foods from spoiling.** Use re-useable ice packs. Also a frozen juice pack can double-up as an ice pack to save space since the juice will defrost and be ready to drink by lunch time.
- **Keep peanut butter and jelly sandwiches from getting soggy.** Spread both sides of bread with peanut butter and put the jelly in the middle!
- **Cold winter days.** Children would welcome a bowl of steamy soup in their lunch box. Use a sturdy wide-mouth insulated container which can double as a bowl.

Last but not least, play and physical activity should be part of your child's lunch break. Physical activity promotes healthy living and helps children have energy for school. When children are healthy and active, their appetite is the best indicator to guide them when and how much to eat.

If you have questions about the nutritional value of lunch foods, or need ideas and recipes for kids lunches, call the Leeds, Grenville, Lanark District Health Unit at 1-800-660-5853 and ask to speak to a Dietitian. Or visit our website at [www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org).

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