



## Simple Solutions for...

# Balanced School Day Nutrition Breaks

The Balanced School Day is a change in routine for you and your children. Instead of two recess periods and one lunch, students will have two nutrition and exercise breaks.

## Packaging Healthy Foods for Your Child's Break

- Try to include foods from at least three of the four food groups in Canada's Food Guide for each break. Foods from the four food groups will give your children the energy and nutrients they need to concentrate and stay awake in class. See "Balanced School Day Menu Ideas" (*inside*).
- Add two nutritious beverages. Choose from the following beverages most of the time: white or chocolate milk, water, 100% unsweetened fruit juices or fortified soy beverages.
- Meals for your child can be balanced in a variety of ways. Consider their unique eating habits, likes, dislikes and appetite.
- Mix and match menu ideas or substitute with food items your children prefer. Also, you can add more food or reduce portions depending on how much they eat. Use Canada's Food Guide for examples of serving sizes.
- Keep a list on the fridge of favourite meals and let your children "order off the menu." Check back in a few months to update the list and add new menu items.
- Involve your children in planning and preparing their meal breaks. This can be done the night before.
- On pizza and sub days, make sure your children have either milk or juice to drink along with their sub or pizza. Send healthy snacks such as cheese cubes with apple slices and grapes or unsweetened cereal and milk for the other break.
- Many schools are now peanut and/or nut free. Check with your school before sending any peanut or nut products with your child.

## Easy Tips to Help Pack School Meals Your Child Will Eat

### Label and Separate

- Label containers #1 and #2 or Break One, Break Two.
- Put dividers in the lunch bag so that the children eat everything above the cardboard in the first break and then lift the card and eat the rest at the second break.
- Cut sandwiches in two and pack in two plastic bags or containers, one half for each break.

## Planning and Preparing Meals

- Cut up extra veggies when making stir-fry dishes to use as veggies and dip for the next day.
- Send leftovers like pizza, stew, macaroni and cheese or soup.
- When making weekend meals, make extra and freeze leftovers in individual portion sizes.
- Bake muffins, banana bread or cookies on the weekend to use during the week.

## Keeping Foods Hot and Cold

- To keep foods hot, use an insulated bottle or thermos. First, fill the bottle with boiling water and let it stand for a few minutes. Then, empty the bottle and fill it with steaming, hot food.
- To keep food cold, use an insulated lunch bag and pack a frozen drink that will thaw by one of the breaks or use a freezer pack.
- Great items to freeze are bottled water, juice boxes, reusable beverage containers or yogurt.
- Clean lunch bags, food containers, water bottles and all utensils everyday.



# Balanced School Day Menu Ideas

Include three or four food groups from Canada's Food Guide at each break.  
Here are some examples.

**Legend**

 = Grain Product Food Group

 = Milk & Alternatives Food Group

 = Vegetables & Fruit Food Group

 = Meat & Alternatives Food Group

Please note: The food pictures symbolize food groups, not number of servings. See Canada's Food Guide to determine the number of servings and serving sizes your child needs.

## Break 1 Break 2

Oatmeal raisin muffin 	Sliced turkey on whole wheat bread or bagel  
Banana 	100% fruit juice 
Milk 	Baby carrots 
	Milk pudding cup 

## Break 1 Break 2

Container of whole grain cereal 	One whole wheat pita with salsa and cheese  
Milk 	Milk 
Apple 	Cucumber slices 
Hard-boiled egg 	Chickpeas or sliced ham 

## Break 1 Break 2

Cheese 	Light tuna or egg salad on whole wheat bread  
Whole wheat crackers 	Salad with dressing 
Grapes 	Milk 
100% fruit juice 	

## Break 1

- 1-2 cold waffles 
- Applesauce 
- Yogurt 
- Water

## Break 2

- Homemade stew or soup (with lean meat, vegetables) 
- Fruit 
- Whole wheat crackers 
- Chocolate milk 

## Break 1

- ½ whole wheat wrap filled with vegetables and hummus 
- Fruit cup 
- Milk 

## Break 2

- Second ½ of wrap 
- Fig bars 
- Strawberries 
- Yogurt drink 

For some children, food allergies can be very serious. Check with your school about foods to avoid such as peanuts or nuts.

# Organizing Food for a School Day

Here are two ways you can organize your children's meals. Choose the one that suits your child's eating habits and appetite.

### Break #1

- Sliced vegetables
- Yogurt
- Muffin
- Water

### Break #2

- Whole sandwich
- Fruit cup
- Milk



### Break #1

- ½ Sandwich
- Fruit cup
- Yogurt
- Water

### Break #2

- ½ Sandwich
- Sliced vegetables
- Muffin
- Milk



## Concerns?

### *I am worried that my children will be too hungry by the first break.*

The difference between the first break of the Balanced Day schedule and the recess break in the more traditional schedule is about 15 to 20 minutes, depending on how your school adjusts the schedule. This will not be enough of a difference to affect your children's hunger.

Be sure to encourage your children to eat a well-balanced breakfast before school. A breakfast, including three of the four food groups will provide your children with the energy they need to learn during the first 100-minute block of instructional time.

### *The second break is later than the traditional lunch break. I am worried my child will be too hungry by the second break.*

With the Balanced Day schedule, children have enough time to eat nutrient-rich foods from three of the four food groups at the first break. This will provide them with the energy they need to be alert and ready to learn for the second 100-minute block of instructional time.

### *Will my children come home hungry if they don't have an afternoon recess snack?*

Parents who have children in schools following the Balanced Day schedule commented that their children were less famished when they returned home. This is likely because children are able to eat a well-balanced "mini-meal" at the second break that includes foods from at least three of the four food groups. This helps to sustain their energy longer. Just like children in the traditional break, they will likely be ready for a small after-school snack to keep them energized until dinner.

## For more information...

visit [www.hnhu.org](http://www.hnhu.org) for these resources, and much more:

1. Canada's Food Guide
2. School Lunch Your Kids Will Munch

or

contact the Public Health Dietitian at the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit.



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