

# Healthy Snack Tips for parents of EXCEL participants

(Adapted from *Breakfast, Lunch and Snack Ideas for Elementary Students*, Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, <http://www.novascotia.ca/dhw/healthy-development/documents/breakfast-lunch-and-snack-ideas-for-school-age-children.pdf>)

Active growing children need small, nutritious snacks to keep them going throughout the day. See *Eating Well With Canada's Food Guide* (myfoodguide.com) for recommended amounts and types of foods and beverages for your child.

Healthy snacks have foods from at least 2 of the 4 food groups and are “tooth-friendly” - that is, they don't leave sticky sugar on children's teeth. Sweet sticky foods increase the risk of cavities and shouldn't be eaten as snacks at school. Save them for special occasions at home where children can brush their teeth after eating them.

Snacks can be good for the environment as well as good for children. You can pack snacks in reusable plastic containers, wrap them in waxed paper that can go in the compost bin, or send snacks that don't need to be wrapped at all, like fresh fruit.

## Allergies

Some children have life-threatening allergies to peanuts or other foods. Please check with your school to determine what foods are not appropriate to send.

## Foods for Healthy Snacking at School

### Vegetables and Fruit

- Raw fruit: fruit is naturally sweet, so most children love it. Fruit can be served whole, sliced, cut in half, cubed, or in wedges. Try apples, apricots, bananas, blackberries, cantaloupe, cherries, grapefruit, grapes (red, green or purple), honeydew melon, kiwi (cut in half and give child a spoon to eat it), mandarin oranges, mangoes, nectarines, oranges, peaches, pears, pineapple, raspberries, strawberries, tangerines, watermelon and more!
- Frozen and canned fruit (canned in water), applesauce (unsweetened)
- Raw vegetables: serve them raw or with dip, salad dressing or hummus. Try broccoli, carrot sticks or baby carrots, cauliflower, celery sticks, cucumber, peppers (green, red or yellow), snap peas, snow peas, string beans, tomato slices or grape or cherry tomatoes, zucchini slices and more!

### Grain Products

- Whole grain bread, pita, tortilla, bagel, rolls or English muffin
- Whole grain crackers
- Unsweetened, whole grain cereal
- Whole grain muffin
- Air popped popcorn

### **Milk and Alternatives**

- White milk (2% MF or less)
- Fortified soy beverages
- Yogurt or yogurt dip (2% MF or less)
- Hard cheese (20% MF or less)

### **Meat and Alternatives**

- Lean meat slices
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Nut free spreads/butters
- Hummus

### **Try a Great Snack Combination**

- Whole grain crackers and cheese
- Nut free spreads/butters on a whole grain bagel
- Half of a sandwich
- Plain yogurt with fresh or frozen fruit added
- Vegetables and hummus
- Trail mix (mix of whole grain cereals) and milk
- Smoothies (mix fruit, vegetables, milk and/or yogurt)
- Mini pitas with tzatziki dip

### **Fun with Food**

Children experience food using taste, touch and sight. Keep them interested with lunches that include a variety of shapes, colours and textures.

- Shapes: Cut sandwiches into triangles or diamonds. Use cookie cutters to make fun shapes.
- Change the bread: Try different kinds of whole grains (rye, quinoa) as well as the type of bread like whole grain tortillas, bagels and pitas.
- Switch the cheese: Offer a variety of cheese such as, mozzarella, cheddar, Jack, and Swiss. Present them in different forms, such as cubes, strings, or slices.
- Switch up the veggies and fruit: Give your kids something different to experience with each bite. Try cutting them into different shapes like balls, strips, coin or chunks. Pair different colours like green & red or purple & orange.
- Kids love to dip: Use cottage cheese, hummus, yogurt, or guacamole as healthy dips for veggies or whole grain crackers.

### **Beverages**

Healthy, active children often get thirsty and need to drink throughout the day. Remember to encourage children to satisfy their thirst with water between meals!

### **Keeping Foods Safe**

Pack foods that need to be kept cold in an insulated lunch bag. Include an ice pack.