



# Packing a Safe Lunch for Your Child

**Bright Horizons®** believes meal times should be happy and enjoyable — and they should promote healthy eating habits. If you're packing a lunch for your child, please take the following peanut- and nut-free suggestions into consideration to keep meal times safe for everyone, and fun and nutritious for your child.

We suggest using the USDA's MyPlate recommendations to create well-balanced meals. Healthy meals will give your child the energy and stamina to get the most out of each day and take advantage of all the fun learning experiences.

## Peanut- and Nut-Safe Policy

Our center is a peanut- and nut-safe facility. All ingredients should be checked to screen-out products that contain nuts, are prepared in a factory where nuts are present, or on equipment that processes nut products. This will help eliminate any potential risk to children with nut allergies.

If your child is bringing food to the center to share with other children (for a birthday party, for example), it must be whole, un-cut fruit or commercially prepared, packaged foods in pre-sealed containers. Only sealed products with ingredient labels verifying there are no peanuts or tree nuts, no traces from the equipment used for processing, or no related products of any kind will be served to the children.



## Lunch-Packing Tips

Whether you're used to packing your child's lunch each day or the task is new to you, take the following tips into consideration:

- ▶ Always wash your hands in warm, soapy water before handling any food. If your child is helping you, make sure that he/she has done the same.
- ▶ Use an insulated lunch/bento box or bag.
- ▶ When you prepare perishable food items such as sandwiches for the next day, refrigerate them overnight. Add non-perishable food items the following morning.
- ▶ **Due to limited space at the center, refrigerators will not be available to keep your child's lunch cold.** Please use a gel-pack, frozen drink (such as a bottle of water), or a commercial ice pack to keep food cold. Or, fill a plastic refrigerator container with water and freeze it to make a homemade ice pack. Place foods that must be kept cold closest to the ice pack. If you're packing dairy products, you may need extra ice packs to keep them at the proper temperature.
- ▶ When you're packing a cold drink or a warm liquid, use a thermos. If packing an item that needs to remain warm, fill it with hot water, let it stand for approximately 10 minutes, and pour the water out before filling it with warm food (make sure the food is at the proper temperature for your child to consume). Do not pack soups with a cream or milk base. **Please keep in mind that we are not able to heat or prepare foods at the center.**
- ▶ Fill reusable and spillproof plastic food containers or recyclable deli meat containers with fruits and vegetables, cheese, or pieces of meat, as well as homemade leftovers.
- ▶ Cut all food into bite-size, easy-to-swallow pieces.
- ▶ Consider packing finger foods as an alternative to the traditional lunch box meal.
- ▶ Wrap sandwiches separately.
- ▶ Label all lunch bento/bags with your child's full name.
- ▶ Wash reusable lunch boxes every night and clean the ice packs. Wipe them with a baking soda and water solution once per week to eliminate odors.
- ▶ If you're using a brown bag for your child's lunch, make sure it is new and clean, rather than a bag that has carried groceries. Avoid using a bag that is wet or stained.

# Food Suggestions

Are you looking for lunch-packing inspiration? Try commercially prepared and ready-to-eat meats, such as ham and turkey. Leftovers from dinner the night before are always a good choice, too.

Many foods, such as baby carrots, pre-cut apples, cheese and crackers, and string cheese, come pre-packaged in child-sized portions.

Fresh fruits and vegetables travel well, making them perfect for lunch. Just remember to wash them first.

Juice boxes and water bottles can keep your child hydrated throughout the day, and easily fit in lunch bags and boxes. However, you may not need to pack a drink for your child — double check with the center to see if they serve milk, 100% fruit juice, or water at lunch and snack times.



## Cold Sandwiches

- ▶ Chicken salad
- ▶ Egg salad
- ▶ Ham and cheese
- ▶ Roast beef
- ▶ Soy or sun butter & jelly
- ▶ Tuna salad
- ▶ Turkey or chicken
- ▶ Turkey salad

## Canned Fruit

(in light syrup or its own juice)

- ▶ Applesauce
- ▶ Fruit cocktail
- ▶ Mandarin oranges
- ▶ Peaches
- ▶ Pears
- ▶ Pineapple

## Fresh/Dried Fruit

- ▶ Apples
- ▶ Bananas
- ▶ Blueberries
- ▶ Cantaloupe
- ▶ Fruit salad
- ▶ Honeydew
- ▶ Oranges
- ▶ Peaches
- ▶ Pears
- ▶ Pineapple
- ▶ Plums
- ▶ Raisins
- ▶ Raspberries
- ▶ Strawberries

*Note: Grapes should not be given to children under 4 years of age, unless they are seedless and cut lengthwise into bite-size pieces.*

## Vegetables

- ▶ Carrot sticks
- ▶ Celery sticks
- ▶ Cucumber sticks
- ▶ Other raw veggies

*Note: Do not give celery or carrot sticks to children under 4 years of age.*

## Miscellaneous

- ▶ Chicken
- ▶ Cottage cheese
- ▶ Hard boiled egg
- ▶ Hummus
- ▶ Salad
- ▶ Salsa
- ▶ Yogurt

## Bread

- ▶ Banana\*
- ▶ Carrot\*
- ▶ Oatmeal
- ▶ Pita
- ▶ Raisin
- ▶ Rye
- ▶ Whole wheat
- ▶ Zucchini\*

*\* Without nuts*

## Foods to Avoid

- ▶ Nuts
- ▶ Soda
- ▶ Sweets (candy, cookies, donuts, cakes, and sugary cereal)

*Note: Honey should not be given to children under 1 year of age due to bacterial spores; however, it is harmless for older children.*

## Additions

- ▶ Bread sticks
- ▶ Cheese sticks
- ▶ Whole wheat crackers

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, foods that are round, hard, small, thick, sticky, smooth, or slippery are a potential choking hazard and shouldn't be given to children under 4 years of age. These foods include:

**Examples of such foods are:**

- ▶ Banana rounds
- ▶ Celery
- ▶ Cherry/grape tomatoes
- ▶ Chips
- ▶ Chunks of meat larger than can be swallowed whole
- ▶ Grapes (whole)
- ▶ Green beans (whole)
- ▶ Gum
- ▶ Gummy candy
- ▶ Hard candy
- ▶ Hard pretzels
- ▶ Hotdogs (whole or sliced into rounds)
- ▶ Lollipops
- ▶ Marshmallows
- ▶ Nuts
- ▶ Peanuts
- ▶ Popcorn
- ▶ Raw carrot rounds
- ▶ Raw peas
- ▶ Seeds
- ▶ Spoonfuls of seed or nut butter

Hotdogs and grapes should be cut lengthwise, into bite-size pieces; bananas should be cut lengthwise into small pieces; and raw carrots should be chopped or cut into thin strips that are a safe size for your child. Carefully remove bones from any fish or meat and cut into small pieces.



# Food Temperatures

Make sure you pack foods safely and keep them at the correct temperature. Below is a list of foods and whether they need to be kept warm or cold, or are safe at room temperature. Please also keep in mind that these foods should be free of peanuts, other nuts, and nut products.

## **Foods that should be kept cold (use an ice pack and insulated lunch bag):**

- ▶ Meats, fish, poultry, processed meats
- ▶ Eggs
- ▶ Milk, soft cheese, yogurt, custards, puddings
- ▶ Peeled and cut vegetables
- ▶ Fruit juice that's been opened
- ▶ Pasta salad; chicken, tuna, and egg salad; green salad
- ▶ Cooked pasta, rice, other cooked grains

## **Foods that should be kept warm (use a thermos):**

- ▶ Soups
- ▶ Chili
- ▶ Casseroles, such as lasagna
- ▶ Refried or baked beans

## **Foods that are safe at room temperature:**

- ▶ Breads, crackers, cereal
- ▶ Soy and sun butter
- ▶ Jelly
- ▶ Whole (un-cut) fruit, dried fruit, unopened canned fruit
- ▶ Unopened juice boxes
- ▶ Hard cheese
- ▶ Unopened cans of tuna, meat, poultry
- ▶ Raw vegetables
- ▶ Ketchup, mustard, margarine

