

MyPlate Lunch Bag Ideas

Fruits

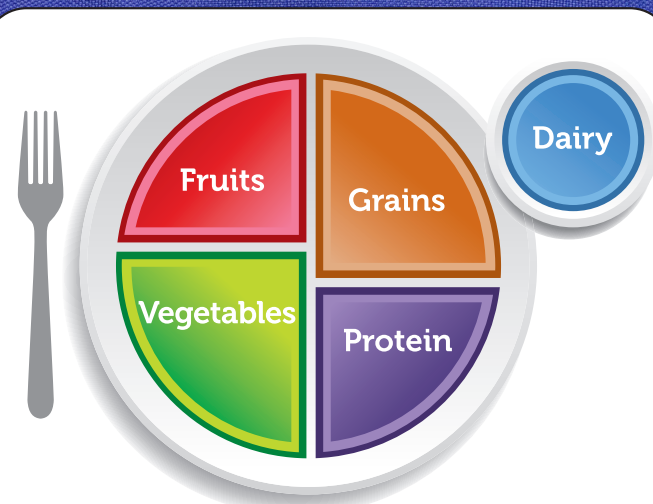
Lunch Bag Ideas: Fresh, dried, or packaged fruits such as apricots, oranges, peaches, cherries, grapes, pears, bananas, plums, kiwi, apples, melon cubes, pineapples, strawberries, no sugar-added applesauce, and fruit cups are all enjoyed by kids. Including fruits in season can help kids better understand where and how food is grown.

Preparation/Packing Tips: Wash under cool running water before packing. If the fruit is not a fragile item, rub well while washing. Smaller children may prefer cut fruit rather than whole (orange smiles are popular); be sure cut fruit is packaged and kept cool.

Vegetables

Lunch Bag Ideas: Variety is key—in addition to miniature carrots, slices of red, yellow, and orange pepper; broccoli florets; cherry or grape tomatoes; cucumber or zucchini slices; and jicama pack well. When in season, try to include veggies from your own garden or the nearest farmers' market. Outside the growing season, let your kids help select veggies at the grocery store to include in their lunches.

Preparation/Packing Tips: Use skinny baby carrots, make ants on a log (peanut butter-filled celery stick with raisins), use spinach leaves in a wrap, or pack a healthy dip such as hummus. Keep cut veggies cool.



Milk/Beverage

Lunch Bag Ideas: Low fat or skim milk, 100% fruit juices, low sodium juices or smoothies, and water are all smart beverage choices. Non-milk beverages should only be offered after calcium intake recommendations have been met for the day. Because of the high sugar content, flavored milks such as chocolate and strawberry should be offered occasionally rather than daily.

Preparation/Packing Tips: Milk can be purchased at school for a very low cost. This is the best bet to be sure the milk is kept cold and the product is safe.

Grains

Lunch Bag Ideas: Use whole grain rather than white sandwich bread. Think about whole wheat, cinnamon, raisin, herb, Boston brown, and French breads. Perhaps a whole grain thin bun/rounds, whole wheat pita, Kaiser roll, whole grain hard roll, whole wheat hamburger bun, or an English muffin could be used as part of the lunch. Making a wrap using tortillas or flatbread provides variety to the traditional sandwich. Mix it up!

Protein

Lunch Bag Ideas: Turkey, ham, roast beef, chicken or tuna salad, nuts and peanut butter, cheese sticks with crackers, hard cooked eggs, and hummus are all popular with most kids.

Preparation/Packing Tips: Some protein foods (e.g., peanut butter) are shelf stable so temperature controls are not needed. But most meats, dairy, eggs, or prepared legumes do need to be kept cold. Make meat sandwiches the night before and place in the refrigerator or freezer.

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