



Feeding school success



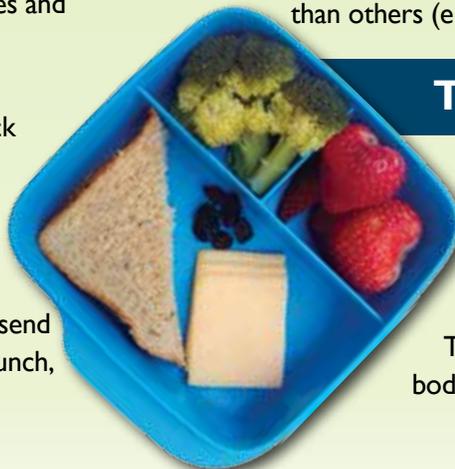
Packing lunches and snacks for your child can be challenging, but is well worth the effort. The primary years are the perfect time to get into a routine for packing lunches and snacks that will continue through your child's school years.

Pack 'real' food

By one year of age, children should be enjoying foods the family is eating. Food companies have created many 'kid' foods such as yogurt tubes, lunch kits and drink boxes; however, these are not the best choices for nutrition, and are often costly. Pack your child's lunch using these tips:

- Pack food that the family eats at home (e.g. sandwiches/wraps, leftovers, cut up vegetables and fruit)
- Pack a reusable water bottle and clean it with soap and water daily
- Buy reusable containers of different sizes and then find a lunch bag that will fit them
- Put your child's name or initials on the containers and remember a freezer pack to keep foods safe!

Even though packing the same lunch foods each day can get boring, your child might be happy (and comforted) by the options you are providing. If you want to send something new to school in your child's lunch, you might want to try it at home first.



Every day is different

The way to know how much food to send to school with your child is by trial and error. Ask him or her to bring home any food that is not eaten and then ask some questions.

- Did you have enough food to eat today?
- Did you have enough time to eat?
- Could you open the container(s)?

Work together to figure out what will work best, and keep in mind there will be times when your child needs more food than others (e.g. during growth spurts).



Timing of meals and snacks

Schools have meal and snack times that may be different than at home. Pack enough food for the school day and let your child choose. Try not to make rules about what and how much they should eat at each break. They will learn on their own to trust what their body tells them about hunger and fullness.



Treats at school

Children are eating more treats that are high in sugar, salt and fat than ever before. This is causing serious health problems as well as picky eating. Tips for handling treats:

- Save treats for home instead of packing them for school
- You decide how often treats should be offered, not your child
- Be casual when you do offer treats and let your child enjoy them without making a fuss
- Do not reward or bribe your child with treats

Children learn how to handle these foods from you. If you handle them as “no big deal” and “once in a while”, they will do this as well.

Role modelling

Students make better choices when their school ‘walks the talk’ about nutrition. For example, students learn in class to eat more vegetables and fruit. Walking the talk would mean the school would offer vegetables and fruit for celebrations instead of hotdogs and pepperoni pizza. Also, students can practice what they learn by fundraising with plants (or other non-food items) instead of chocolate bars or cookie dough. Parents and guardians can help the school be good role models for nutrition. Visit www.brightbites.ca to find out how.

Becoming a good eater

Include your child in:

- Food shopping
- Gardening
- Cooking
- Packing lunches

Eat together at the table as much as possible.

The more involved your child is in all of these activities, the more likely he or she will be a good eater and you will have pleasant mealtimes! Check out www.thefamilydinnerproject.com for family meal ideas.



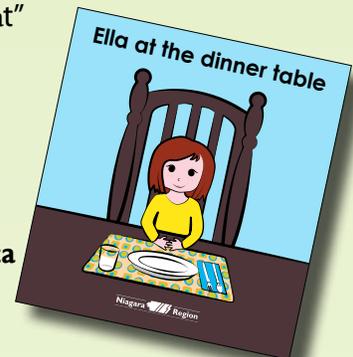
Learning eaters

Most young children are cautious about new foods. They need to learn new tastes and textures in a safe, pleasant and comfortable setting. Parents and caregivers can help children learn to be good eaters by:

- Having a relaxed attitude
- Enjoying a variety of food
- Not talking about the health benefits of food.

For example, say “this tastes great” instead of “this will make you strong”.

Ella at the dinner table is a story about a young child (learning eater) trying new foods. It is available for download at www.niagararegion.ca (search: ella), along with feeding tips for parents.



For more information

Registered Dietitians at EatRight Ontario can help with:

- Easy, nutritious lunch and snack ideas
- Food safety tips
- Picky eating (which is really ‘learning eating’)
- And more!

Call **1-877-510-5102** or visit www.eatrightontario.ca. Plus, visit www.karenlebillon.com to see why French Kids Eat Everything!

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