

# **Bright Horizons Food From Home**



## Packing a Safe Lunch for Your Child

Bright Horizons believes meal times should be a happy and enjoyable time for children. We offer the following suggestions in the hope of developing healthy eating habits for the children in our care. Lunch can be fun, nutritional, and easy for you to prepare.

Please note we are not able to heat or prepare meals for children as this not only keeps the children waiting for their lunch but also takes the staff away from their time with the children. Additionally, microwaves often heat food unevenly. Due to limited spaced, refrigerators are not available to keep your child's lunch cold. We suggest that you use insulated lunch bags and ice packs to keep food cool and thermoses to keep food warm.

However, there is a wide variety of healthy, enjoyable lunches that can be made for your child. To assist you in preparing your child's lunch, we have prepared the following tips to help ensure that your child has a safe and healthy lunch.

Additionally, we strongly recommend avoiding foods that are high in fat or sugar in your child's lunch and using the USDA's MyPlate recommendations to assure your child's meal is well-balanced. Providing a healthy lunch will assure your child has the energy and stamina to get the most out of their day and fully participate in all of the fun learning experiences.

- 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 box or bag.
- Refrigerate over night any perishable food items such as sandwiches prepared for the next day. Add non-perishable food items the following morning.
- Use a gel-pack, frozen drink (such as a bottle of water), a commercial ice pack or fill a plastic refrigerator container with water and freeze for a homemade freeze pack to keep food cold. Place foods that must be kept cold, closest to the ice pack. If sending dairy products, extra ice packs may be required to keep food at the proper temperature.
- Use a thermos to keep drinks cold until lunchtime. Also use a thermos to keep soups or other hot liquids hot. Fill a thermos with hot water and let it stand for approximately 10 minutes before putting the hot food in. Do not pack soups with a cream or milk base.
- Plastic food containers or recyclable butter tubs work well for packing fruits and vegetables, cheese, or pieces of meat or chicken and homemade leftovers from the night before.
- Cut all food into bite-sized, easy-to-swallow pieces.
- Children often like finger foods as an alternative to the traditional lunch box meal
- Avoid using mayonnaise or eggs on sandwiches, especially if the sandwich or item isn't refrigerated or properly cooled.
- Wrap sandwiches in separate plastic bags or aluminum foil.
- All lunch boxes/ bags should be labeled with the child's full name.
- Wash out reusable lunchboxes every night, including the ice packs. Use a baking soda and water solution once a week to eliminate odors.
- Use only new, clean brown bags. Don't reuse bags that have carried groceries. Never use a bag that is wet or stained.

## Food Suggestions

Commercially prepared and ready-to-eat meats, such as ham and turkey are good lunchbox choices because they last well. Leftovers from dinner the night before are always a good choice.

Many foods like baby-cut carrots, cheese and crackers, string cheese and other nutritious foods now come packaged in child-sized portions. These are also good lunch options.

Fresh fruits and vegetables are not only nutritious; they also travel well, making them perfect for lunch. Remember to wash fruits and vegetables before packing. The center may serve milk at lunch and juice, milk or water at snack time depending on the snack and space availability.

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|---|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Cold Sandwiches</b><br/>Ham and Cheese<br/>Turkey or Chicken<br/>Tuna<br/>Egg<br/>Chicken Salad<br/>Turkey Salad</p>                        | <p><b>Canned Fruit (in light syrup)</b><br/>Applesauce<br/>Fruit Cocktail<br/>Peaches<br/>Pears<br/>Pineapple<br/>Mandarin Oranges</p> | <p><b>Fresh/Dried Fruit</b><br/>Cantaloupe<br/>Strawberries<br/>Oranges<br/>Apples<br/>Bananas<br/>Peaches<br/>Honeydew<br/>Plums<br/>Pineapple<br/>Pears<br/>Fruit Salad<br/>Blueberries<br/>Raspberries<br/>Raisins</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Grapes should not be given to children under four years old, unless they are seedless and cut in bite size pieces lengthwise.</p> | <p><b>Vegetables</b><br/>Carrot Sticks<br/>Celery Sticks<br/>Cucumber Sticks<br/>Other Raw Veggies</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Do not give children under four years old celery or carrot sticks.</p> |
| <p><b>Miscellaneous</b><br/>Salad<br/>Yogurt<br/>Cottage Cheese<br/>Hard Boiled Egg<br/>Chicken Drumstick<br/>Wheat Germ<br/>Salsa<br/>Hummus</p> | <p><b>Breads</b><br/>Whole Wheat<br/>Rye<br/>Pita<br/>Raisin<br/>Banana<br/>Oatmeal<br/>Zucchini<br/>Carrot</p>                        | <p><b>Additions</b><br/>Cheese Sticks<br/>Bread Sticks<br/>Goldfish Crackers</p>  | <p><b>Foods To Avoid</b><br/>Sweets (Candy, Donuts, Cakes, and Sugary Cereal)<br/>Soda<br/>Nuts</p>   |

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

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that foods that are round, hard, small, thick, sticky, smooth, or slippery, should not be given to children less than 4 years of age due to their potential choking hazard. Examples of such foods are:

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

If feeding hotdogs or grapes, they should be cut into bite-sized lengthwise pieces. Bananas should be cut lengthwise into small pieces and raw carrots chopped or cut into thin strips will be safe for your child. Carefully remove bones from any fish or meat and cut into small pieces. Peanut butter (if allowed in the center) spread thinly on crackers is appropriate to send in your child's lunch.

Our center is a **peanut and nut safe facility**. Please carefully review labels of any foods you send in with your child to the center to ensure they are "nut safe" and have no warning labels of potential peanut or tree nut traces or manufactured on equipment that processes peanuts or tree nuts to help eliminate any potential risk to children with severe nut allergies. Any food that is brought in for *sharing* among the children must be either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in pre-sealed containers. Only sealed products with ingredient labels verifying there are no peanuts, no peanut products and no potential traces of nuts from the equipment used for processing will be served to the children.

## Food Temperatures

When packing your child's lunch, you want to make certain that you pack the foods safely, keeping foods at the correct temperature. Below is a list of foods and what temperature they should be kept at to ensure the lunch you pack will be safe for your child. Please keep in mind that these foods should be free of peanuts, other nuts and nut products.

| <b>Foods to be kept Cold</b>                     | <b>Room Temperature Foods</b>                         | <b>Hot or Cold Foods</b> |
|--|---|--------------------------|
| Meats, Fish, Poultry, Processed Meats            | Breads, Crackers, Cereal, Cookies, Fruit Pies         | Soups                    |
| Eggs   | Jelly   | Chili                    |
| Milk, Soft Cheese, Yogurt, Custards and Puddings | Whole Uncut Fruit, Dried Fruit, Unopened Canned Fruit | Casseroles (lasagna)     |
| Peeled and Cut Vegetables                        | Unopened Juice Boxes                                  | Refried or Baked Beans   |
| Opened Fruit Juice                               | Hard Cheese   |                          |
| Pasta Salad, Chicken and Tuna Salad, Salad       | Unopened cans of Tuna, Meats, Poultry                 |                          |
| Cooked Pasta, Rice and other Cooked Grains       | Raw Vegetables  |                          |
|  | Ketchup, Mustard, Margarine                           |                          |