



Use MyPlate to pack a healthy school lunch

It's back-to-school time and there are many preparations to make before sending kids off to school. If you send lunch with your child, make sure it's a healthy lunch by using [MyPlate](#) as a guideline.

MyPlate was released by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as a way to help Americans quickly plan a healthy meal. The icon shows a plate that is half full of fruits and vegetables, and the other half with protein foods and grains. The grain icon is a little larger than the protein icon and the vegetable is larger than fruit, meaning you need a little more grains and vegetables. There is a dairy icon next to the plate.

When you are planning school lunches, imagine how the foods you choose will fit on the plate. Think about choosing foods that will pack safely and that your child will enjoy. Some examples of foods from each of the groups include:

- Vegetables: carrots, cucumbers, broccoli, sugar snap peas, vegetable soup, cherry tomatoes, cauliflower
- Grains: whole-wheat crackers, pita bread, tortillas, mini bagels, flat or thin buns, soft pretzel
- Fruit: melon, grapes, banana, apple, orange, Clementine, individual portions of mixed fruit, blueberries, plums, dried fruit, mandarin oranges
- Protein: beans, peanut butter, tuna fish, turkey, boiled eggs or other leftover meat
- Dairy: milk (purchased at school), string cheese, cheese sticks or cheese on a sandwich, yogurt

A lunch box meal using MyPlate could include a peanut butter and jelly whole-wheat tortilla roll-up, grapes, carrot sticks and milk purchased at school. Another idea could be whole-wheat crackers with cheese and turkey slices, cherry tomatoes, sugar snap peas, small banana and water.

Children are more likely to consume a meal they have helped plan or prepare. Let them plan lists of foods from each of the food groups and help choose the foods at the grocery store. They can choose something from each of the groups for a healthy lunch.

The last thing to do is make sure their food will be safe. Use freezer packs made for lunch boxes or freeze a bottle of water to put in an insulated lunch bag.