



FEBRUARY 2020

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE  
STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS  
OF EMERGENCY  
FEEDING PROGRAMS



## Ask the Expert:

### The Importance of Eating Meals

Written by Caroline Parker; Purdue University  
Dietetics & Nutrition, Fitness and Health 2021

Eating three well balanced meals and snacks throughout the day is important for growth and development in kids. A regular eating routine may increase study performance and grades of kids in school. For example, eating breakfast has been shown to improve memory in kids. Even if breakfast is not an option at home, school breakfast and lunch programs have also been shown to help academic performance and class attendance.

On the other hand, skipping meals may have negative effects on children. When kids skip meals, they are more likely to eat and drink high-calorie fast foods. Over time, this leads to eating and drinking excess calories and not having enough fiber and nutrients in the diet. Research shows that obese children are more likely to skip meals than non-obese children, and that kids who eat regular meals and snacks have higher intakes of fruits, vegetables, and milk. In addition, kids with a regular eating pattern better understand information on nutrition labels. Overall, skipping meals is related to making poor food choices, little knowledge of nutrition labeling, and obesity.

It can be challenging to provide lunch for kids. The National School Lunch Program is an assisted meal program in public schools, non-profit private schools, and child care institutions that helps feed children regularly. Lunches provided are healthy, balanced, and are little to no cost.

Foods included in USDA Foods Programs such as The National School Lunch Program include "US grown, processed, and packed, high quality vegetables, fruits, dairy products, whole grains, lean meats, and other protein options". To improve the quality of the food even more, levels of sodium, sugar, and fat have been reduced in many of the options. Applications for free and reduced price meals can be found at this website address: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/applying-free-and-reduced-price-school-meals>.

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Sources: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3439577/>, <https://www.smores.com/69kzf-national-school-lunch-program>, <https://www.horrycountyschools.net/cms/lib/SC02209139/Centricity/Domain/2718/school-lunch-breakfastprograms.png>

## Food Safety: How to Pack Lunch Safely

Written by Jinxia Yao; Purdue University Biomedical Engineering 2022

### Before Packing

1. Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds.
2. Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and countertops with hot soapy water before preparing food.
3. Keep family pets away from the kitchen counters.

### Packing Lunches

1. Pack just the amount of perishable food that can be eaten at lunch.
2. Pack lunch bags right before leaving home.
3. Use insulated, soft-sided lunch boxes or bags if available.
4. Include at least 2 cold sources (frozen gel packs or frozen bottled water) to keep lunches cold.
5. Use an insulated container to keep food like soup hot.
  - Fill the container with boiling water, let it stand for a few minutes. Empty the water, and fill it with piping hot food.



## Well Balanced School Lunch - Peanut Butter & Banana Sandwich with Sides

### Ingredients (1 serving)

1. Whole grains; 2 slices sandwich bread
2. Protein/Fat; 1 tablespoons peanut butter\*
3. Fruit; 1 banana
4. Vegetables; baby carrots and cherry tomatoes
5. Dairy/Protein; low fat greek yogurt\* (5.3 oz) or milk

### Instructions

1. The morning of, prepare the sandwich by spreading 1 tablespoon of peanut butter on a slice of bread.
2. Slice the banana, put it on the smeared peanut butter, and combine the two halves of the sandwich together.
3. Place all ingredients into an insulated lunch bag with 2 cold sources.

\*Peanut butter and yogurt can be substituted for other sources of protein and fat.



### **Nutrition Facts (per serving)**

Calories: 505  
Protein: 30g  
Carbs: 76.5g

## Eating Right: Making School Lunches Healthy, Economical, and Fun

Written by Sasha Martin; Purdue University Dietetics & Nutrition, Fitness, and Health 2014

Sending your child to school with a healthy, affordable, and balanced lunch is as easy as plan, purchase and prepare!

### Plan:

Planning ahead makes busy school mornings less stressful. Start off by checking your school lunch calendar with your child, and let them choose days that they want to get hot lunch at school. Doing this early on helps with meal planning, grocery shopping, and makes it so you aren't unpleasantly surprised by an untouched lunch at the end of the day. While going through the menu, have a discussion with your child about what they like in a lunch.

### Purchase:

Use this conversation as a guideline for your grocery shopping. Buy items that will be used often in larger quantities, or stock up when they go on sale. Whenever possible, choose in-season produce because it is cheaper and more flavorful! Buy veggies that last both in your refrigerator and in a lunch box. Megan Potosky, a clinical dietitian and recent Purdue graduate suggests, "Apples, oranges, carrots, and celery are economical choices because they can keep for weeks in the refrigerator." Choose sturdy vegetables that won't be wilted and unappetizing by lunchtime. Fruits like apples and bananas that can be sent whole with the lunch saves valuable time in the morning, and prevents waste if the fruit isn't eaten that day because it can be saved for the next. Potosky also recommends no-sugar-added varieties of canned fruit when there aren't as many options for fresh fruit.

### Prepare:

Prepare as much as you can in advance, making lunch sized portions the night before. You can batch cook meat or hard boiled eggs early in the week. Have cut up vegetables, ready to grab fruit, grains and protein options prepared, and let your kids pack their lunch the night before. A reusable tupperware with compartments or a bento box can be helpful and save you from having to buy lots of plastic bags. You can also save money and prep time by sending dinner leftovers for lunch. Buy in bulk and double family-favorite recipes to take for lunch throughout the week. Having a thermos can be helpful for this. Let your child choose a thermos in their favorite color or pattern as an added treat.

The more you involve your child in the planning and preparation of their lunches, the more likely they are to eat the food that is packed. By having conversations with your child about planning nutritionally balanced lunches and allowing them to choose the food to pack, you are teaching them healthy habits for their school career and life.



Send comments and/or change of address to:  
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This newsletter is edited by Caroline Parker and Heather A. Eicher-Miller, PhD and is created by the Eicher-Miller Lab in the Department of Nutrition Science at Purdue University. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

## In The News: Donating Leftover Lunches

Written by Caroline Parker; Purdue University Dietetics & Nutrition, Fitness, and Health 2021

Many families across Indiana are food insecure. Some kids are unsure of when their next meal will be. To help families struggling with food insecurity, Woodland Elementary School in Elkhart, Indiana has recently introduced a program called Cultivate.

The purpose of this program is to, "re-purpose cafeteria food into frozen meals that needy students can take home over the weekend". Meals that kids receive are frozen, stored in recyclable containers, and each include a protein, vegetable, and starch.

Cultivate is also a part of Madison STEAM Academy in South Bend, Indiana. Dozens of kids from this school receive packaged meals donated from Notre Dame University and local event and catering services.



Because about 13% of kids ages 15 to 17 live in poverty, this program is essential for helping kids thrive at home and in school. You too can help feed these kids by asking your local schools to implement Cultivate.