

Nourishing Notes

Peanut-Safe Lunches

Parents may be surprised to learn that more and more schools are announcing peanut-free policies. Schools are doing their best to provide a safe learning environment for all students as more children enter the school system with severe food allergies. Peanut allergy is the most common life-threatening food allergy in children. You can help protect the well-being of children with peanut allergy by removing all peanuts and peanut-containing products from your child's school lunch.

Easy Ideas...Without the Peanuts

Plan a balanced lunch that includes food choices from at least three of the four food groups of *Canada's Food Guide*. This mixture of carbohydrate and protein foods offers a lunch with staying power.

Carbohydrate		Protein	
Grain Products	Vegetables & Fruit	Milk & Alternatives	Meat & Alternatives
Melba Toast	Baby carrots (with dip) Piece of fruit		Cooked chicken cubes
English muffin (cheese sandwich)	Sweet pepper strips Canned fruit in juice	Cheese slices (cheese sandwich)	
Cooked macaroni (pasta salad) Dinner roll	Celery sticks, cucumber slices Juice box, 100% real	Yogurt	Canned tuna with mayonnaise (pasta salad)

Smaller portions of foods that do not fall within a food group should be limited and saved for a special treat. This includes foods that are higher in fat, salt, sugar, or calories such as potato chips, doughnuts, or cookies. Always read the ingredient list to be sure that packaged foods do not contain peanuts.

What About Protein?

There's no need to worry about your child not getting enough protein at lunch without the peanuts. You'll be happy to know that they're probably getting more than enough protein each day already. Daily protein requirements can be met simply by eating different foods from all four food groups of the *Food Guide*. Protein is primarily found in the *Meat & Alternatives* and *Milk & Alternatives* food groups. And, although *Grain Products* and *Vegetables & Fruit* are known for their carbohydrate content, they also provide small amounts of protein.

The following foods contain about the same amount of protein as 2 tablespoons of peanut butter (1 serving of *Meat & Alternatives*).

- ◆ 1 plain bagel
- ◆ 2 slices (30 g) chicken luncheon meat
- ◆ 1 egg, hard-boiled
- ◆ ½ cup hummus
- ◆ 1 cup (250 mL) milk
- ◆ 1 piece (30 g) string cheese, mozzarella
- ◆ 1 cup (250 mL) raisin bran cereal
- ◆ ¾ cup (175 g) yogurt

Provide lots of variety to keep lunches interesting.

Peanut-Safe Lunches

Vary lunch routines with these ideas:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
½ Pita stuffed with meat, cheese, lettuce Carrot sticks Orange sections Milk	Hard-boiled egg Raisin-bran muffin Celery sticks Milk pudding Fruit juice, 100% real	Cheese strings Bread sticks Cucumber slices and grape tomatoes Banana Milk	Cold pizza Green pepper strips Yogurt Fruit juice, 100% real	Tabouleh (bulgar wheat/tomato salad) Raw vegetables with dip Cantaloupe cubes Chocolate milk

Don't forget to include snacks. Snacks packed full of nutrition include small portions of food choices from two food groups of *Canada's Food Guide*.

Some peanut-free ideas include:

- ◆ ½ bagel with *peabutter*
- ◆ Cheese and crackers
- ◆ Mini pitas with hummus
- ◆ Plain yogurt with fresh fruit

Golden Peabutter is a nutritious nut-free spread that can be a substitute for peanut butter. It's made from golden brown peas.
www.peabutter.ca

Keep Foods Safe

Allergic reactions to peanuts can be fatal. Take caution to avoid **cross-contamination** (when a safe food becomes unsafe through contact with peanuts) as well as foodborne illness.

- ◆ Be sure commercial products (e.g. cookies, granola bars) are free of peanuts. Read ingredient lists carefully.
- ◆ Wash hands before preparing or handling food.
- ◆ Clean all cooking or work surfaces.
- ◆ Use a wide-mouth thermos to keep milk cold and foods, like chili and pasta, hot.
- ◆ Keep foods cold with a frozen juice box or mini freezer pack in an insulated lunch bag.
- ◆ Make sandwiches the night before and refrigerate. They will stay cold better than those made in the morning.
- ◆ Clean insulated lunch bags, lunch boxes, plastic containers, and all utensils every day with hot, soapy water and rinse well.

For more information about peanut allergy, read Nourishing Notes *Peanut Allergy Update* or visit *Peanuts: one of the nine most common allergens*, www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/labeti/allerg/pearaae.shtml.

Pair up dips with bread sticks, crackers, pita bread, or raw vegetables. Go for baba ghanouj (eggplant), hummus (chickpea), or tzatziki (yogurt) dips for a new combination.

