

Lunches present a problem. They take forever to create, are expensive if you buy them in individual packages, and often come home uneaten. AND, our licenser for VA STATE has said **all food needs to be cut so that it is not a choking hazard for the children.** This can be very time consuming for the teacher to cut 30 grapes for each child, 10 cherry tomatoes, 6 slices of pepperoni or hot dogs, etc. When we do this, some children are finished eating before others have even begun! PLEASE cut your child's food so that it is not a round, quarter sized or larger. The licenser also asked that we cut carrots lengthwise. Thank you for your assistance! If you have questions, please talk with Beth (bposey@comcast.net, 703-892-4112)



**Cut it up** Until children reach the **age of 4**, they can't chew food very well. Cut your child's snack into bite-size pieces. If you're serving vegetables, cook them first so they're soft, then chop them so they're easy to eat.

Foods that may cause young children to choke include peanuts, whole grapes, whole cherry tomatoes, carrots, pumpkin or sunflower seeds, chunks of peanut butter, celery, and cherries with pits. **\*We are a nut-free facility.**

**Get your child to help** Tap into your child's curiosity. Take your child shopping with you and let him pick out whatever fresh fruit or vegetable catches his fancy. Kids are more likely to eat and enjoy what they choose.

**Keep servings small** How much your child needs to eat daily depends on her age, weight, and activity level. Most 1- to 2-year-olds eat between 800 and 1,000 calories a day. A healthy portion size for a toddler is about a quarter of an adult portion. There's no need to count calories – just remember to adjust portions accordingly.

**Don't worry about fat** Toddlers need to get about half their calories from dietary fat for normal growth and development. That may seem like a lot, but if your child is eating only 1,000 calories a day, you don't need to worry about him gaining weight too quickly. Once your child reaches the age of 2, gradually decrease the amount of fat in his diet until it's less than about a third of his daily calories.

**Be flexible** It's not unusual for young kids to do an about face when it comes to their favorite food. Your child may want the same lunch several days in a row, then suddenly decide he doesn't like it anymore. It can be frustrating, but try not to make a big deal about it. Have other healthy choices on hand. If you're offering something he hasn't tried before, just give him a tiny bit and serve it alongside a familiar food. And don't insist that he eat a full portion of something he's not used to.

## Frozen Foods and Pasta

Grab a bag of whole grain pasta out of the cupboard. Or let the kids decide what pasta they want. Then go into the freezer and grab a few nitrate free hot dogs and some frozen (or fresh) veggies. Now you're ready to make lunch in under 10 minutes!

1. Boil water
2. Add Pasta and set timer (cook for however long the bag says)
3. 1/2 way through, add frozen hot dog – cutting up is optional\*
4. When 2-3 minutes remain, add a handful of frozen veggies
5. Drain and serve!

Usually takes less than 10 minutes and the kids love it!

**Change it up!** Don't want to use hot dogs? Toss the noodles and veggies in some olive oil or butter and sprinkle with parmesan cheese. Toss some pepperonis or deli meat in for a change in flavor or cube up some cheese.

\*If cutting up the hot dog, remember to cut up length wise first, then width wise to reduce the chance of choking.

## Roll Ups and Fresh Fruit

Another lunch idea that takes less than 10 minutes. Simply pull out some lunch meats and cheeses and put them on a plate along with a few veggies. When your kids are deciding what to put in their roll ups, wash and cut up some fruit to go on the side!

Once they've decided it's time to start building! Here's what you do:

1. Place a slice of meat down
2. Add some mayo or mustard (or other spread)
3. Add cheese on top
4. Sprinkle with veggies (easier to slice up or shred)
5. Roll up and eat!

Serve with some fruit on the side and enjoy.

## Quesadillas 10 ways!

Quesadillas are super easy. The most work spent on them is the time prepping what goes into them. And that can be done in as little as 5 minutes. You just have to know what you want in them! Here are a few suggestions for what to put in your quesadilla:

Now it's time to make your quesadilla!

1. Heat up pan and butter one side of tortilla.
2. Put tortilla in heated pan, butter side down
3. Sprinkle with cheese and other ingredients
4. Fold over into a half moon and cook until golden brown
5. Flip, cook other side, and serve!

I love serving my quesadillas with some left over rice and some ripe avocado and salsa. The kids love theirs with apple slices and tortilla chips.