



HEALTHY PACKED LUNCH IDEAS

Encourage your child to enjoy a variety of foods and benefit from a range of nutrients.

If you choose to provide a packed lunch for your child, it's worth following these tips to ensure you include the key nutrients needed to support your child's growth and learning.

What to include:

Fruits and Vegetables

How much?

At least 1 fruit and 1 vegetable in each lunchbox.

Examples:

Fresh fruit, tinned fruits (in juice not syrup), dried fruits, salad items and vegetables.

You could include vegetable crudites for dipping or add veggies to salads, pasta or rice dishes.

Why?

Fruit and vegetables are a good source of vitamins, minerals, fibre and anti-oxidants.

Tips:

Aim for a variety of colours. Not only will it make the lunchbox look more appetising but it also provides a variety of different vitamins and minerals.

Starchy Foods

How much?

Include at least 1 portion

Examples:

Sandwiches, pitta bread, wraps, pasta salad, potato salad, sweet potato wedges, rice dishes, cous cous, bread sticks, crackers, oat cakes, rice cakes.

Why?

These foods will provide energy, fuel for vital tissues and organs including the brain, fibre, B vitamins and other minerals.

Tips:

Try to include some wholegrain varieties from this food group each week such as brown, wholemeal, granary or 50/50 bread, wholewheat pasta or brown rice.

Beans, Pulses, Fish, Eggs, Meat and other Proteins

How much?

Include at least 1 portion in every lunchbox.

Examples:

Chicken, turkey, pork, beef, lamb, beans, fish, shellfish, lentils, chickpeas, pulses, soya products such as tofu, quorn, hummus.

Why?

These foods provide protein, iron and zinc.

Tips:

Try to include at least one portion of fish each week. Oily fish such as fresh, tinned or frozen salmon, sardines, pilchards, mackerel, herring, and fresh tuna may be beneficial for children's cognitive development. Try a salmon or mackerel pate as a dip or sandwich filler.

Dairy and Alternatives

How much?

Include at least 1 portion

Examples:

Carton of milk, cheese, yoghurts, custard, rice pudding, milk or yoghurt based smoothies, soya, oat milk

Why?

These foods provide calcium, B vitamins and protein.

Tips:

If your child is over 2yrs and growing well opt for semi-skimmed milk and low fat yoghurts and cheeses.

Drinks

How much?

Include a healthy drink daily.

Examples:

Milk and water are the only tooth friendly drinks for children and are the best options for your child's lunchbox.

Tips:

There's no need to spend money on exotic or colourful looking drinks. Tap water is free and one of the healthiest drinks you can offer your child. Fill a reusable bottle with fresh tap water.

AVOID including the following:

Foods high in fat, sugar or salt

Avoid including these foods in your child's lunchbox.

Examples:

Crisps, biscuits, cereal bars, chocolate, sweets and other confectionery, fried foods, takeaway or fast food meals, pastries, fizzy drinks or juice style drinks.

Why?

These foods are often known as empty calories because they provide energy but very few useful nutrients. These foods often contain lots of sugar, salt or saturated fat.

For more tips and recipes, visit-

<https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/>