Practical Tips for a Healthy Lunchbox

- Try to vary the contents of the lunchbox daily. That way you can ensure your child is getting a variety of nutrients their bodies need to function and grow.
- Involve your child in preparing their lunchbox. They are more likely to enjoy food they have made themselves.
- Wash your hands before handling food. Wash fruit and vegetables before use and put food in clean containers.
- To keep food fresh, make sure it is stored properly: lunches packed the night before need to be stored in the fridge. If using rice, make sure it is cooled quickly and stored in the fridge overnight. To keep your lunch fresh during the day, use a cool bag and put in a frozen drink or reusable ice pack.
- Keep different breads in the freezer so you can just take out and defrost what you need for one day's lunchbox. Using different breads will make the lunchbox more interesting and enjoyable.
- If your child refuses to eat brown bread, try a lighter variety or make sandwiches using a slice of white and a slice of wholemeal bread.
- For variety, use pitta strips, crackers, bread sticks, or fruit and vegetable finger foods with a dip.
- Always try to add a little salad to a sandwich. To avoid soggy sandwiches, dry the salad before adding it to the sandwich or put it in a separate sandwich bag or tub.
- Make a fruit smoothie by blending juice and fruit together, or a yogurt or milk drink by mixing yoghurt or semi-skimmed milk with pureed fruit.
- Make a lower-fat salad dressing by mixing it with some low-fat yoghurt or semi-skimmed milk.
- You can use leftovers: for example, rice and curry, vegetable pizza or pasta and sauce.
- Make a salad using rice, potato or pasta from the night before, mixed with vegetables, beans and so on.







Healthier Packed Lunches for Children

What you need to know

Eating well is important. Children need to eat well as it will give them energy and nutrients to grow and develop, be healthy and active.

A healthy, enjoyable lunch give children the energy they need to learn and play at school.




Use the information in this leaflet to help make your child a healthier packed lunch. Please support the school's food policy by following these guidelines.



What is a healthy packed lunch?

A healthy packed lunch is a balanced meal providing a variety of nutrients, to be found in our four food groups:

Starchy Foods

Base each meal on a starchy food, such as bread, potato, rice, pasta, yam. Starchy foods give energy, fibre, vitamins and minerals.



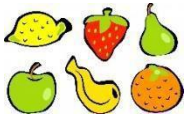
- Bread, try different types, like pitta bread, wraps or bread rolls.
- Other starchy foods, such as pasta or rice.
- √ Whole grain varieties are best for fibre, which is vital for a healthy digestive system.



Meat and Alternatives

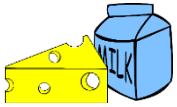
Add some protein, for example meat, fish, eggs, beans or pulses. Protein foods build muscles and provide minerals.

- Lean Meats, such as chicken, turkey or ham.
- Egg, such as quiche or omelette.
- Meat alternatives, such as tofu or tempeh.
- Dishes containing pulses, beans or meat, for example dahl, stew or bean salad.
- Use butter, margarine, mayonnaise or salad dressings sparingly, because these can be high in fat, or use lower fat alternatives.
- ✗ The school does not allow nuts in packed lunches.





Milk and Dairy Foods



Include a dairy product or dairy alternative, such as fromage frais or tzatziki. These foods provide calcium necessary for strong bones and teeth, as well as providing protein and vitamins.

- √ Lower fat varieties are healthier.

Fruit and Vegetables



Don't forget to include fruit and vegetables. You can use fresh, frozen, tinned or dried. Fruit and vegetables are full of vitamins, minerals and fibre necessary for the body to function properly and to keep you strong and healthy.

- Add tomato, lettuce or beetroot to a salad.
- A vegetable dish, such as salad or roast vegetables.
- Fresh fruit, such as apple, banana or pear.
- Dried fruit, such as raisins, apricots or figs.
- Fruit salad (fresh or tinned in juice) or vegetable salad.
- Finger foods, such as cherry tomatoes, cucumber sticks or celery. Good with a dip, such as houmous or guacamole.
- √ Use fresh fruit and vegetables, which are in season to help the environment and enjoy variety!
- √ Aim to include at least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetable or salad.





Drinks

Drinks especially water, help children to concentrate and feel well. Water is freely available in school.

- Other health drinks such as milk, pure 100% juice, sparkling water or yoghurt or milk drink can also be included.



Snacks and Confectionery

Snack foods may be included occasionally but aim to make healthier choices. Snack foods tend to be high in fat, sugar and salt. Foods high in fat can cause excessive weight and may lead to heart disease. High sugar foods are high in calories and bad for teeth. High salt food may increase blood pressure, which can lead to heart disease and some cancers.

For a healthier snack:

- Replace sweets and chocolate with dried fruit, a small bunch of grapes or fruit salad.
- Replace cakes and pastries with fruit bread or malt loaf.
- Replace salted savoury snacks with rice cakes or breadsticks.
- ✗ Please do not put chocolate, nuts, sweets, fizzy drinks or sugary drinks in packed lunches.