



# easy ways to make lunchboxes healthier



School dinners are changing for the better. You should have noticed a difference in what's on offer, with healthier foods being served.

If your children prefer packed lunches here are some tips to help make their packed lunch healthier too. You can make up the lunch in the morning before school. Or, if you're usually pushed for time in the morning, prepare it the night before and put it in the fridge.

## me sized meals

Even though they are growing children need to eat the right amount for their age. Young children will need quite small portions of foods and older children who are very active may need much larger amounts.

# a healthy lunchbox contains a variety of foods

**Start with starchy foods - always include foods like bread, rolls, bagels, wraps, rice, pasta or potato.**

Start their packed lunch off with some starchy carbohydrate to give long-lasting energy. Wholegrain or white bread are probably the easiest choice but for a change from ordinary bread you could try pittas, bagels, baguettes, ciabatta, bread rolls or wraps.

Wholegrain or plain pasta or couscous can be mixed with meat, fish and vegetables and eaten cold.

**and then Protein**

Add a portion a food rich in protein, such as chicken, lean meat, fish, egg or cheese either on its own or as a sandwich filler.

**add a couple of portions of fruit and vegetables**

Try to add a portion of fruit and a portion of vegetables to help towards their 5-a-day.

**need something extra?**

Add a healthy snack like a yoghurt, currant bun or rice pudding.

**thirsty?**

Remember always include a drink. Water, milk, pure fruit juice and fruit smoothies are good choices. It is important your child has plenty of water to drink, this should be freely available in school.

## five a day



- As well as fresh fruit such as apples and bananas you can add variety by including a handful of grapes, chopped fresh fruit salad, orange segments or melon pieces, or a small box of raisins or tinned fruit in juice.
- Don't forget to include some vegetables, such as cherry tomatoes, or sticks of carrot, cucumber, broccoli, celery and peppers.
- Once a week, why not go for a colourful mixed salad and a bread roll.

## keep it cool! - avoid food poisoning

Lunchboxes should be kept cool - ideally use an insulated lunchbox with icepacks or a frozen carton of juice to keep it cool. If sandwiches are prepared the previous evening, always store them in a fridge overnight. And don't forget to keep the packed lunch cool at school.

here are a few lunch ideas to try, or you could make up your own combinations

Suggestions for a weeks packed lunch menus:



## day one

Multigrain bread or rolls  
Cheddar cheese with apple slices  
or cranberry sauce or chopped  
hard boiled eggs with cucumber or  
lettuce

Banana  
Flapjack  
Pure fruit juice - orange



## day two

Cooked pasta or couscous mixed  
with cooked chicken or turkey,  
tomatoes, and lettuce

Pear  
A pot of fruit yoghurt  
Sparkling water

## day three

Multigrain bread or crackers  
Light low fat cheese spread and  
dried apricots or cucumber

Tangerine /satsuma  
Malt loaf or scotch pancakes  
Pure fruit juice - apple

## day four

Pitta pockets or wraps with ham  
with sliced tomatoes, lettuce and  
cucumber  
Apple

Bara Brith  
Yoghurt drink  
Plain water



## day five

Ciabatta bread or bagels  
Tuna, cucumber, green pepper,  
sweetcorn and tomato  
Pot of mixed sliced fruit

- melon and pineapple cubes  
with grapes  
Rice pudding pot  
Fruit smoothie

## top tips for a healthier lunchbox

- Pack foods attractively; cut foods into shapes; use a variety of containers. This is an opportunity to re-cycle packaging e.g. use clean, empty containers.
- Involve your child in planning his/her lunchbox. Encourage him/her to try new foods. Variety is the key to a healthier lunchbox. Give praise, reward stickers etc, if they eat new foods.
- You could also raid the fridge for leftovers. Some foods taste just as good cold, such as pizza or pasta. Cook extra pasta or couscous. Mix with cut-up vegetables, and protein such as tuna, then just add your favourite dressing.
- Make sandwiches with thickly sliced bread, or choose rolls or mini pitta breads. Go for wholegrain or wholemeal varieties when you can.

Many children are taking food to school that contains too much saturated fat, salt and sugar. To help parents give their children varied and balanced lunchboxes, here are some practical tips and suggestions.

## tips for cutting down on fat

- Cut down on the amount of butter, margarine or mayonnaise you use and use lower fat alternatives.
- Use low-fat sandwich fillings, such as chicken, lean meats, ham, beef, fish (e.g. tuna), boiled egg.

## tips for reducing sugar

- Rather than drinks that are very high in sugar, such as fizzy drinks or 'juice drinks', go for unsweetened fruit juice, water, milk or fruit smoothies.
- Replace cakes, chocolates and biscuits with scones, currant buns, fruit bread, fruit, pot of rice pudding or yoghurt.



## tips for reducing salt

- Cut down on snacks that are high in salt, such as crisps and salted nuts. Replace them with unsalted or lower salt varieties or choose fresh, dried or tinned fruit instead.
- Watch out for heavily salted foods such as bacon, cheese and smoked fish. It's not a good idea to give these to your child every day.
- Go easy with sauces and pickles because these are often very high in salt.