

# Healthy lunches

Liven up your lunchbox!

At the start of a new school term you will need plenty of inspiration to make your kids lunchboxes healthy and fun to eat. Packed lunches can make an important contribution to energy and nutrient intakes for children so it is important to get the right balance.

## Healthy lunchbox tips

Variety is key for good health, so try the following tips for some new ideas...

- Try different breads or starchy foods e.g. pitta pockets, tortilla wraps, crisp breads, couscous, pasta, potato salad, rice
- Make fruit salad or fruit kebabs with bite-sized chunks of their favourite fruits (a sprinkle of lemon juice can stop fruit from going brown)
- Add salad and some reduced fat mayonnaise, chutney or pickle to liven up their usual sandwich
- Get dipping! Try tasty dips like hummus, cottage cheese or salsa with crackers, breadsticks or vegetable sticks
- Recycle! Last night's dinner can be a tasty lunch the next day. For example, making left-over pasta or rice into a salad or having a cold slice of pizza.



## Healthy packed lunches

Lunch is an important meal for everyone, to provide energy and nutrients to keep you going through the afternoon, and many people choose to eat a packed lunch, whether it's a lunch box for your child to take to school or a lunch you can take to work. The key to a healthy packed lunch is getting the right balance. Choose a wide variety of foods which will help provide you with all the nutrients you need and enough energy to get through the day. The advice provided is based on the governments' eatwell plate.

To make your packed lunch as healthy as possible try to include:

- A good portion of starchy food, e.g. wholegrain roll, wraps or pitta pockets, pasta or rice.
- A portion of lean meat, fish, egg, pulses or other non-dairy protein sources, e.g. chicken, ham, beef, tuna, sardines, mackerel, egg, beans or hummus

- Plenty of fruit and vegetables, e.g. an apple, satsuma, handful of cherry tomatoes or carrot sticks, small tub of fruit salad or small box of raisins
- A portion of semi-skimmed or 1% fat milk or other dairy food, e.g. reduced fat cheese, yogurt or fromage frais
- A drink e.g. fruit juice, semi-skimmed or 1% fat milk, yogurt drink or a bottle of water.

### **Top lunch box tips**

Variety in what you eat is really important for good health, and no one wants to eat the same sandwich everyday, so here are some tips to liven up your lunch box (but still keep it healthy)!

- Try different breads or other starchy foods e.g. pitta pockets, tortilla wraps, crispbreads, couscous, pasta, potato salad or rice salad
- Include vegetables with a tasty dip, e.g. cherry tomatoes, sticks of pepper, carrot or cucumber with reduced fat hummus or cottage cheese
- Make your own fruit salad with bite size chunks of all your favourite fruits
- Try a variety of different drinks e.g. carton of unsweetened fruit juice, bottle of water, carton of semi-skimmed milk, low fat yogurt or milk drink or fruit smoothies
- Add salad and some reduced fat mayonnaise, mustard, chutney or pickle to liven up your usual sandwich or wrap
- Use last night's leftovers, such as couscous with roasted vegetables, pasta and sauce with vegetables or a cold slice of pizza
- Having a healthy lunch does not mean giving up all the foods you enjoy. Foods such a slice of malt loaf or banana bread, a fruit scone, a small packet of crisps or a chocolate biscuit can be included from time to time for variety and appeal!

### **Food safety and hygiene**

Harmful bacteria can multiply when food is stored at room temperature. It is often difficult to find refrigeration for packed lunches, especially for children at school and so it is important to consider food safety when preparing and storing a packed lunch.

Here are some tips for keeping your packed lunch safe:

- Put a cool pack or frozen drink in the lunch box to keep it cool
- Wash your hands and clean any surfaces before preparing and eating food
- If you can, store the packed lunch in a fridge.