

Packing a Lunchbox

National
Lunch
box
Week

Our fact sheets provide plenty of tips and ideas on packing positive, enjoyable and nourishing lunchboxes.

Balance the Box

Help kids to GO, GROW and GLOW by including food from each group in the lunchbox.

Go foods

- GRANES
 - Wholegrain bread, rolls or wraps
 - Focaccia or Turkini bread
 - Fruit bread
 - English muffins or bagels
 - Pasta, noodles or rice
 - Quinoa or couscous
 - Wholegrain crispbreads or crackers
- DAIRY
 - Tubs of yoghurt
 - Cheese stick, slices or cubes
 - Custard
 - Milk poppers
 - Calcium fortified soy or other plant-based milks
- MEAT & ALTERNATIVES
 - Lean chicken, beef, lamb, pork or turkey
 - Hardboiled egg
 - Canned tuna or salmon
 - Hummus dip
 - Lentils, chickpeas and kidney beans
 - Salmon
 - Falafels
 - Tofu cubes
- VEGETABLES
 - Cherry tomatoes
 - Celery, capsicum, cucumber or carrot sticks
 - Corn cob or tinned corn spears
 - Green beans or snow peas
 - Roasted or steamed vegetables
 - Lentils, chickpeas or kidney beans

Glow foods

- FRUIT
 - Whole fresh fruit
 - Fresh fruit salad
 - Tub of dried fruit
 - Fruit puree
 - Dried fruit
- VEGETABLES
 - Cherry tomatoes
 - Celery, capsicum, cucumber or carrot sticks
 - Corn cob or tinned corn spears
 - Green beans or snow peas
 - Roasted or steamed vegetables
 - Lentils, chickpeas or kidney beans

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Packing a Lunchbox

A well packed lunchbox helps children learn, play, and stay focused at school. Include these four steps for a satisfying lunchbox.

Main item
Sandwich, wrap, roll, pasta salad, frittata, sushi, rice paper rolls.

Fruit or vegetable snack
Whole fruit, veggie sticks, canned fruit, dried fruit, vegetables.

Second snack
Yogurt, crackers, dip, cheese, popcorn, mini muffins, boiled egg, muesli bar.

Drink
Tap water is best; plain UHT milk is also an option.

Reminder to:

- Keep the lunchbox cold by using an insulated lunchbox with an ice brick or frozen water bottle.
- Involve children in preparing and packing their own lunchbox.

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Keep it Safe

Lunchboxes often stay in the school bag for several hours in warm conditions promoting bacterial growth and increasing the risk of food poisoning. These simple steps to keep lunchbox food safe and fresh.

STAY CLEAN

- Wash your hands before and after preparing food.
- Keep food benches and chopping boards clean and dry.
- Ensure lunchbox and utensils are washed before use.

STAY COOL

- Use an insulated lunchbox.
- Pack an ice brick, frozen water bottle or frozen yoghurt pouch to keep the lunchbox cool.
- Refrigerate the lunchbox where possible.
- Keep the lunchbox out of the sun.

HIGH RISK FOODS

Be extra mindful of the following foods, which can lead to food poisoning if not kept cold.

- Meat
- Poultry
- Fish
- Eggs
- Soft cheese such as ricotta or cottage cheese
- Yogurt
- Custard
- Dips
- Cold pasta or rice salads
- Mayonnaise-based salads

Uneaten high risk foods left in the lunchbox at the end of the day should be thrown away.

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Lunchbox Tips for the School Transition

School lunchboxes can be a big change for children starting school. Here are some ideas to make the transition easier.

Check containers are easy to open

Check that children are able to open the containers and packets that you put in their lunchbox. Some can be tricky!

Practice before school starts

Try packing morning tea and lunch in a lunchbox to help children get used to selecting foods from their lunchbox.

Getting kids involved

Some kids have ideas on what they would like in their lunchbox. Some also like to help prepare and pack it.

Practice mealtimes

In the weeks before school starts it can be helpful to have a meal at home with your little one used to it. Creating a social environment with other children can help too.

Lunchbox leftovers

Some days the lunchbox will hardly be eaten. This is normal and can be home empty. Children's internal sense of appetite is stronger than adults. Trust they will make up for it at other meals.

Talk about food safety

Where food is not stored in a fridge and out of the sun, it can go off quickly which foods would be good to eat first. E.g. cheese, yoghurt, meat or eggs.

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Lunchbox Swaps

If you're looking for some inspiration to get out of old lunchbox habits - try these easy swaps.

| | |
|--|--|
| SWAP OUT White bread, rolls, wraps, crackers and crispbreads | SWAP IN Wholemeal or wholegrain options |
| SWAP OUT Highly processed lunchbox meats | SWAP IN Tuna, egg, hummus or sliced roast meat |
| SWAP OUT Cordial or sweetened juice poppers | SWAP IN Water or plain milk |
| SWAP OUT Potato chips | SWAP IN Pretzels or popcorn |
| SWAP OUT Sweet and savoury biscuits | SWAP IN Pikelets or wholegrain muesli bar |
| SWAP OUT Iced cakes and cupcakes | SWAP IN Fruit bun or fruit-based muffin |

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Nourishing Grab'n'Go Foods

Here are some lunchbox food ideas for the times when you have no time! Most will last a while in the fridge or pantry and don't need any prep.

GRAINS:

- Crackers
- Popcorn
- Biscs or corn thins
- Pretzels
- Small cereal packets
- Wholemeal bar

MEAT/ALTERNATIVES:

- Minis tins
- Minis can of baked beans
- Hummus, snack tub
- Flavoured chickpea tin
- Seed mix (sunflower, pumpkin)

DAIRY/ALTERNATIVES:

- Cheese stick
- Cottage cheese or pouch
- Cheese slices
- Yoghurt tub or pouch
- Cream cheese snack tub
- Milk or soy popper

FRUIT:

- Apple
- Dried fruit
- Sultana snack pack
- Mandarin
- Mixed dried fruit
- Banana
- Fruit tub

VEGETABLES:

- Cherry tomatoes (cut in half for 3yrs)
- Mini can of Roasted vegetable (older kids >3yrs)
- Roasted vegetable sticks (older kids >3yrs)
- Whole carrot
- Baby cucumbers

See our label reading fact sheet for help selecting packaged products.

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Reading Food Labels

HEALTH STAR RATING

Health Star Ratings are a quick and easy way to compare products. The more stars the healthier the choice.

Remember to always compare products within the same category.

Recommended minimum health star rating of common products

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Breakfast cereals | Sweet snack foods |
| 2 stars | 3 stars |
| Crisps & Hummus | Processed meats |
| 3 stars | 4 stars |

Not all packaged foods have a Health Star Rating. When reading the rating always compare similar products, for example compare one brand of yoghurt with another brand of yoghurt.

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Reading Food Labels

Most packaged foods have an Ingredient List and Nutrition Information Panel (NIP).

INGREDIENT LIST

Ingredients are listed in order of most weight to least. If a source of sugar, salt or saturated fat is listed up the top of the ingredient list then it is just a large part of the food.

Tip:

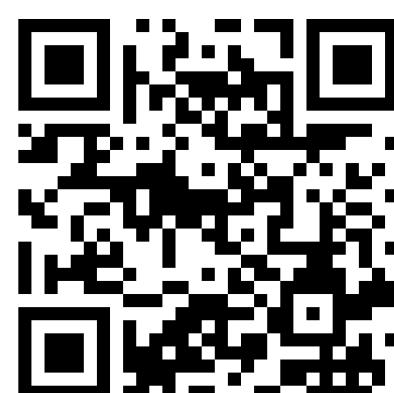
- Sugar may be listed as sucrose, sucrose, maltose, glucose, fructose, honey.
- Salt may be listed as sodium, sea salt, sodium bicarbonate, rock salt.
- Saturated fat may be listed as palm oil, coconut oil, nutella, butter, cream, copra, lard.

NUTRITION INFORMATION PANEL (NIP)

When reading the NIP always compare similar products, for example compare one brand of yoghurt with another brand of yoghurt.

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