

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

GRAINS

- Wholegrain bread, rolls or wraps
- Focaccia or Turkish bread
- Fruit bread
- English muffins or bagels
- Pasta, noodles or rice
- Quinoa or couscous
- Wholegrain crispbreads or crackers

Grow foods

DAIRY

- Tub of yoghurt
- Cheese stick, slices or cubes
- Custard
- Milk popper
- Calcium fortified soy or other plant-based milks

MEAT & ALTERNATIVES

- Lean chicken, beef, lamb, pork or turkey
- Hard-boiled egg
- Canned tuna or salmon
- Hummus dip
- Lentils, chickpeas and kidney beans
- Baked beans
- Falafels
- Tofu cubes

Glow foods

FRUIT

- Whole fresh fruit
- Fresh fruit salad
- Tubs of diced fruit
- Fruit puree
- Dried fruit

VEGETABLES

- Cherry tomatoes
- Celery, capsicum, cucumber or carrot sticks
- Corn cobs or tinned corn spears
- Green beans or snow peas
- 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, lettuce, soups, rice paper rolls.

Fruit or vegetable snack

Whole fruit, veggie sticks, canned fruit, baby vegetables.

Second snack

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

Drink

Tap water is best; plain LUT milk is also an option.

Remember 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. Follow 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
- Egg
- Soft cheese such as ricotta or cottage cheese
- Yogurt
- Custard
- Dips
- Cooked pasta or rice
- Maggi-style bean 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

Some days the lunchbox starts it can in the weeks before school starts it can help to have meals at set times to get your little one used to it. Creating a social environment with other children can help too.

Talk about food safety

Where food is not stored in a fridge and only has an ice pack, explain which foods would be good to eat first. E.g. cheese, yoghurt, meat or eggs.

Lunchbox leftovers

Some days the lunchbox will hardly be touched, other days it will come home empty. Children's internal sense of appetite is stronger than adults. Trust they will make up for it at other meals.

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Lunchbox Swaps

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

SWAP OUT Whole bread, rolls, wraps, crackers and crispbreads → **SWAP IN** Wholemeal or wholegrain options

SWAP OUT Highly processed luncheon 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 savory biscuits → **SWAP IN** Biscuits 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
- Biscuits or cornflakes
- Pretzels
- Small cereal packets
- Wholegrain Flavored Taro

MEAT/ALTERNATIVES:

- Mini tuna tin
- Mini can of baked beans
- Hummus
- Flavored chickpea tin
- Seed mix (sunflower, linseed)

DAIRY/ALTERNATIVES:

- Cheese stick
- Custard tubs or pouch
- Cheese slices
- Yoghurt tubs or pouch
- Cream cheese
- Milk or soy popper

FRUIT:

- Apple
- Pureed fruit
- Sultana snack pack
- Mandarin
- Mixed dried fruit
- Banana
- Fruit tub (in juice)

VEGETABLES:

- Cherry tomatoes (out in half for >3yrs)
- Mini can of corn
- Roasted chickpeas (older kids >3yrs)
- Roasted fava beans (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

Most packaged foods have an ingredient list and Nutrition Information Panel (NIP). Here's what to look for to make a more informed choice.

INGREDIENT LIST

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

Tips:

- Sugar may be listed as: sugar, 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, tallow, butter, cream, coconut, lard.

NUTRITION INFORMATION PANEL (NIP)

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

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