

What's for lunch?



Packing a healthy lunchbox

Children need to eat a variety of foods everyday to be healthy.

Parents can give children a healthy school lunch that tastes great and is good for them too. Many parents say one of the major problems with school lunches is when the children bring them home!

Try to give kids some choice about what they take for lunch, and if possible, get them involved with preparing the 'healthier' foods. Choosing food for a healthy lunch is easy!



What is a healthy school lunch?

A healthy lunchbox has four components:

1. **A main item**, such as a sandwich/wrap/roll, pasta with vegetables, soup, frittata or sushi.
2. **A fruit or vegetable snack**, such as whole fruit, cut up veggie sticks, canned fruit in natural juice, a small salad
3. **A second snack based on a core food**, such as reduced fat yoghurt, grainy crackers with reduced fat cheese, plain popcorn, a slice of raisin bread, a wholemeal fruit muffin, a boiled egg or a can of tuna.
4. **And a drink**. A bottle of tap water is best, and plain UHT milk is also acceptable.

Healthy lunchbox tips

- Use foods from the five core food groups:
 - vegetables and legumes/beans
 - fruit
 - grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high fibre
 - lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans
 - milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or their alternatives, mostly reduced fat

This will ensure that your child is receiving adequate nutrition from various food groups during the day.

- Sandwiches, wraps and rolls are common main lunch items for kids. Choose wholemeal or multigrain varieties and include lots of vegetables.
- Use a variety of fillings to keep children interested.
- Encourage children to drink water throughout the day.
- Limit foods with added sugar, added salt and those high in saturated fat.

Example

Food (food group)

Snack	Main item	Drink
Small high fibre fruit muffin (Grains)	Multigrain bread (Grains)	Water bottle
Mandarin (Fruit)	Salad filling (Vegetable)	125mL reduced fat UHT milk, frozen (Dairy)
Mini cheese stick (Dairy)	Tuna in spring water (Meat)	

Lunchbox ideas

Mix and match the following samples to keep your kids interested in the food you provide:

Lunchbox 1

- Fruit in season
- Boiled egg
- Vegetables with natural yoghurt
- Pita bread, filled with salad vegetables or tabouli and lean rissoles
- Water



Lunchbox 2

- Wholemeal pikelets
- Frozen UHT reduced fat milk 125mL
- Vegetarian pizza or a sandwich
- Vegetable pack
- Fruit salad
- Reduced fat yoghurt



Lunchbox 3

- Fruit in season
- Egg, lettuce, tomato, cheese multigrain sandwich
- Vegetable sticks
- Slice of fruit bread
- Dried fruit and nuts**
- Frozen UHT reduced fat milk 125mL



Lunchbox 4

- Fruit in season
- Bread roll filled with vegetables, cheese and a slice of lean roast beef
- Reduced fat yoghurt
- Grapes
- Water

** While nuts are a nutritious inclusion to the diet of children, it is recommended that you consult your school regarding anaphylactic or nut allergy policies prior to including nuts or products containing nuts in your child's lunchbox.



Plan ahead

Planning ahead for the busy times helps you get through them a little easier. Think about the lunches you will be preparing for the next week and make sure you buy the necessary ingredients when you do your regular shopping.

Food safety

When packing a school lunch, it is important to consider how the lunch will be kept cool to prevent foods and drinks from spoiling.

If food is not stored properly bacteria in and on top of the food can grow and make you and your children sick; for this reason it is essential to keep school lunches cool. Lunches kept in children's school bags all day, are likely to get warm, and foods such as meat or cheese sandwiches, milk, cheese and yoghurt need to be kept cool.

Try the following:

- To keep sandwiches fresh, wrap them in plastic wrap or 'snaplock' plastic bags.
- Freeze small packs of UHT milk or water ahead of time.
- When preparing lunches the night before they will be eaten, make sure they are stored in the fridge overnight
- Choose a lunch box that includes a water bottle. Fill the bottle with water and freeze it, then place it in the lunch box to keep food cold.
- Insulated lunchboxes are also a great option.

