

Eating Well: Lunch Boxes

A well balanced healthy lunch box will provide kids with all the energy and brain power they need for a busy day at nursery or school. Here are some ideas to help you create a healthy lunchbox for your family and avoid waste.



Young children naturally have much smaller stomachs than adults. No matter what you're serving, portion size is very important. Your child's hand size is a good way to measure the portion size they will need for lunch. E.g palm for protein, fist for fruit, fist for carbs, two handfuls for veg, two finger size piece of cheese, thumb-sized serving of spread.

Bread is a staple part of many packed lunches but you can use alternatives to sliced bread, such as pittas, wraps, rolls or flatbreads. Try choosing brown, wholemeal or multigrain options for more fibre which makes you feel fuller and also helps energy levels last longer.

Encourage younger children to eat their packed lunch by including naturally brightly coloured foods with different shapes and textures to help them enjoy their food.



Include chopped colourful vegetables that can be eaten with fingers, such as cherry tomatoes, cucumber slices, carrot sticks, pepper strips, baby sweetcorn, radishes and celery sticks.

Include colourful fruit such as satsuma segments, apples, banana, blueberries, pear, grapes raisins, pineapple, melon,



peach, nectarines or whatever fruits are in season (please be aware that some fruits including grapes may present a choking hazard and must be cut in half before serving).

Instead of processed cheese sticks and slices, try cutting chunks of cheddar, Emmental or edam cheese. It's much cheaper to buy a block of cheese and slice it at home, rather than buy individual portions of cheese.

Stick to a small match-box sized serving of cheese as it is a good source of protein, calcium and vitamins but best eaten in smaller portions as it's also high in saturated fat and salt.

Ready-made pots of jelly can be expensive to buy and it's really easy to make jelly at home. All you need is some small reusable pots with lids. Look out for 'real fruit juice' jelly or 'sugar free' jelly options in the supermarket and follow the instructions for making the jelly and then add frozen berries (e.g. blueberries, raspberries, strawberries) or tinned fruit (e.g. mandarin segments, peach slices, pear halves).

Allow to cool, pop the lids on then keep in the fridge. They will keep for up to 5 days, so are perfect for adding to packed lunches!



Swap
WHEN YOU
COOK

Swap
WHEN YOU
SHOP

Swap
WHEN YOU
SNACK

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Swap for

Fatty processed meats
(e.g. hot dog sausage, pepperoni,
corned beef, luncheon meat etc.)



Lean meat chicken, turkey, tinned tuna (drained)

Deep fried samosas



Oven baked samosas

Butter



Low fat spreads

Bread rolls



Wholemeal bread, wraps or pittas

Crisps



Salad or carrot and cucumber sticks

High sugar and fizzy drinks



Water

Cakes and chocolate



Fresh fruit or tinned fruit in jelly or low fat yoghurt

The Swap Shop

Make swapping fun by getting a few swap ingredients together and asking children to design their own snack.

For a savoury swap try:

Breadsticks
Rice cakes
Crackers
Pitta breads
Low-fat cheese spread
Hummus
Cubes of cucumber
Tomato slices
Carrot sticks
Cubes of reduced fat cheese

For a sweet swap try:

Unsweetened popcorn
(sprinkle cinnamon or other spices
for flavour!)

Slices of fruit

Low-fat natural yoghurt

Low-sugar peanut, cashew or
almond butter (please be aware
of allergies)

Sugar-free jelly

