



Healthy

lunchboxes

for pre-schoolers

What to pack for a
healthy, tasty lunch.

safefood in partnership with



Good food habits set early in childhood can last a lifetime.

We all want to improve our children's wellbeing and help them enjoy learning. Sending them to pre-school with a healthy lunch is a good way to start.

Some pre-schools have guidance to help families to make better choices when planning and preparing lunches. Ask your pre-school if they have guidance.

This leaflet gives you some ideas for your child's lunchbox. A balanced lunchbox will help ensure children have the energy they need to learn and play. If your child is taller or more active, they may need to eat more. Go by their appetite when deciding how much food to offer them.

How can you make a healthy lunchbox more fun?

- Put different things in every day to make lunchtime more fun.
- Get your child involved in planning and choosing what they want to eat.
- Let them pick a different colour of fruit each day.
- Keep the crunch! To stop a sandwich going soggy, arrange the filling in layers with salad in the middle.
- Let them choose a brightly coloured drink bottle and lunchbox or decorate a plain lunchbox with stickers.

Encourage your child to try out new food at home before adding them to a lunchbox. Always cut up food to a size that your child can chew and eat safely. For example, grapes and cherry tomatoes should be cut in quarters.

A healthy lunchbox includes at least one serving from each food group.

Vegetables, salad and fruit



Tip

Use cooked carrot or cucumber sticks with cheese for a more savoury snack.

Limit dried fruit to once a week because dried fruit contains sugar, is sticky and is not kind to teeth.

Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts



Did you know?

Lean cuts of meat such as chicken breast are lower in salt than processed meats such as ham and bacon. Choose lean meat more often than processed meat.

Wholemeal cereals and breads, potatoes, pasta and rice



Tip

Vary the types of bread you give your kids. It keeps well in the freezer so stock up in advance on pitta bread, bagels, rolls... whatever they love.

Did you know?

Young children can meet their fibre needs by having a mix of white and wholemeal cereals and breads.

Milk, yoghurt and cheese



Did you know?

Dairy products are especially important in the diets of children.

They provide calcium to support growing bones and teeth.

Mix and Match

Choose one option from each of the categories below.

Mid-morning snack

Carrot sticks or cucumber with hummus

Half a bagel with nut butter (if pre-school allows) and chopped banana

Breadsticks with cream cheese

Plain yoghurt and half of a sliced pear

Crackers with cheese

Plain yoghurt and 1 mandarin

2 rice cakes with cheese

Small slice of fruit loaf

Lunch

Chopped chicken salad roll

Tuna pasta salad

Lentil soup in a flask

Pasta salad with soft vegetables and grated cheese

Egg salad sandwich

Chopped turkey or ham salad sandwich

Cold rice and chickpea salad

Falafel and soft vegetables wrap

Fruit

5-6 grapes cut in quarters

1 mandarin

1/2 sliced apple

1/2 chopped banana

1 kiwi

1/2 sliced pear

6 berries cut in quarters

Drinks

Water or milk

Suitable Drinks for Children

Plain water and milk are the most suitable drinks for children.

Toddlers should only drink unsweetened fruit juice with meals, and ideally it should be diluted, with one part juice to ten parts water.



- Milk
- Plain water

Plain water and milk are the best choice at any time.



- Unsweetened fruit juice (fruit juice from concentrate is suitable also if it does not contain added sugar)
- Flavoured milk*
- Diluted sugar-free squash
- Yoghurt or milk drinks*
- Smoothies**
- Fruit juice drink (unsweetened)

Limit to a small glass once a day.

It's best to have it at mealtimes.



- Fruit juice drink (sweetened)
- Fizzy drinks (including diet versions)
- Energy drinks

They don't provide important nutrients and they're not good for your children's teeth.

* Compare brands and choose those that are lower in sugar

** Homemade smoothies using whole fruit are best



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For healthy snack ideas search

