

A young boy with short brown hair, wearing a blue and white striped t-shirt, is sitting at a table in a kitchen. He is looking up at an adult whose hands are visible, packing a clear plastic lunchbox. The boy is holding a green backpack. The background shows a brick wall and a white kitchen cabinet.

# Healthy Lunchboxes

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 school with a healthy lunch is a good way to start.**

Most schools have policies to help families to make better choices when planning and preparing school lunches. Ask your school if they have a policy.

This leaflet gives you some ideas for your child's lunchbox. After all, 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.



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

## Vegetables, salad and fruit



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



## Wholemeal cereals and breads, potatoes, pasta and rice



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



### Did you know?

Including wholegrain varieties of breads and cereals will support gut health and prevent constipation.

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

## 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.



## Milk, yoghurt and cheese

---

### Did you know?

Dairy products are especially important in the diets of children and teenagers.

They provide calcium to support growing bones and teeth.

Low-fat dairy products are suitable for children over two years of age.



# Mix and Match

Choose one option from each of the categories below.

## Mid-morning snack

Carrot sticks with cream cheese

—

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

—

Breadsticks with cream cheese

—

Yoghurt and pear

—

Crackers with cheese

—

Yoghurt and apple

—

2 rice cakes with 2 cheese triangles

—

Cucumber sticks with hummus

## Lunch

Chicken salad roll

—

Tuna pasta salad

—

Lentil soup in a flask

—

Pasta salad with tomatoes and grated cheese

—

Egg salad sandwich

—

Turkey salad wrap

—

Cold rice and chickpea salad (tinned chickpeas drained and rinsed with chopped tomato and peppers)

—

Ham, lettuce and tomato sandwich

# Mix and Match

Choose one option from each of the categories below.

## Fruit

10 Grapes

—

2 Mandarins

—

1 Apple

—

1 Banana

—

2 Kiwis

—

1 Pear

—

1 Orange

—

10 Blueberries

## Drinks

Water or Milk

# Suitable Drinks for Children



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

Children should only consume 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\*\*

**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



Publication date: Jan 2024  
Review date: Jan 2026  
Publication code: SFC037 VI: 0124

For healthy snack ideas search

