

Tips for parents

Tips to help promote healthy eating

- Vary the fruit you buy each week for school lunches. Try to buy fruits in season as they will often taste best.
- Vary the breads and sandwich fillings each week.
- Dairy products are particularly important. Yoghurt can be frozen and used to keep the rest of the lunch box cool. Milk does not keep well un-refrigerated, so keep for at home or purchase from school canteen if your child's classroom does not have a refrigerator.
- Involve your child in selecting foods for their lunch box. Giving them two options is plenty of choice to make them feel empowered.
- Get kids involved in food preparation such as making some high-fibre fruit muffins.
- Don't forget water is the best drink. Children should be encouraged to bring their own water bottle with them to school each day.
- Get kids involved in planting some tomatoes or lettuce to be included in their lunch.

Lunch box check list

Does the lunch have a healthy wholesome main?

- Wholegrain or wholemeal sandwich, roll, bagel or wrap filled with
 - Protein source: cheese, tuna, chicken, eggs, beans
 - Salad: avocado, cucumber, carrot, tomato, lettuce
 - Spread: peanut butter, avocado, hummus, cream cheese

Healthy main lunch ideas

- Tuna + corn + grated vegetables + sauce (salsa, chutney)
- Roast beef + salad
- Chicken + coleslaw (low fat dressing)
- Chicken + avocado + lettuce or alfalfa
- Leftover roast veggies, such as zucchini, pumpkin, capsicum or eggplant + ricotta or low fat cheese + pesto
- Grated carrot + sultanas + grated low fat cheese + alfalfa
- Low fat cheese + salad + hummus
- Ricotta + banana + honey OR ricotta + sultanas + grated carrot
- English muffin with tomato and cheese
- Pita bread with tuna, lettuce and mayonnaise
- Turkey, cranberry and spinach in Turkish bread
- Pasta and tuna salad with vegetables

Does the lunchbox contain some delicious dairy? (select at least one)

- Plain milk
- Flavoured milk
- Yoghurt
- Fruche
- Creamed rice
- Cheese and biscuits
- Cheese stick
- Drinking yoghurt

Does the lunchbox have 2 fruity foods? (select at least one fresh fruit option)

- Fresh whole fruit: try to have different varieties
- Dried fruit: banana chips, dried apple, dried apricot
- Snack packs of tinned fruit
- Frozen oranges and frozen banana
- Fruit salad

Other yummy ideas:

- Banana bread
- Homemade fruit muffin
- Popcorn
- Mixed nuts and seeds
- Half fruit scone
- Fruit cake

Stuck for easy fruit and veggie lunchbox fillers?

Here are some veggie and fruit-friendly lunchbox ideas:

- Corn on the cob or little tub of corn kernels
- Chopped fruit salad
- Cherry tomatoes or baby carrots
- Cold jacket potato
- Cut up veggies with a little tub of cream cheese, salsa or reduced fat yoghurt dip
- Mini muffins, scones or pikelets made with added fruit or veggies
- Fruit kebabs (chunks of fruit on paddle-pop sticks)
- Mini tins or containers of fruit in natural juice

Put the 'Snazz' back into the simple sandwich.

Some of the following ideas can help make sandwiches more exciting!

- Triple deckers – use three slices of bread and two fillings
- Cut pita bread in half to make pockets and add filling
- Use whole wheat sandwich-size crackers instead of bread

Ten alternatives to chips and muesli bars

Snack size potato chip packets and muesli bars are convenient options for lunchboxes, however they are not nutrient rich foods. Chips are high in fat and salt, while muesli bars are high in sugar.

Instead try one of our suggested alternatives for healthier eating:

- Rice cakes or crackers
- Pretzels
- Prawn crackers (cooked in microwave)
- Mini toasts
- Pappadums (cooked in microwave)
- Pita chips
- Bread sticks
- Wholegrain crackers with cheese
- Unsalted popcorn
- Dried fruit
- Unsalted nuts and seeds
- Small tins of corn
- Small bag of breakfast cereals eg. Fruity Bites, Fruity-Bix

Calcium for healthy bones and teeth

Calcium helps build strong bones and teeth, and the best sources of it are in milk, cheese and yoghurt. These foods are also sources of energy, protein and essential vitamins riboflavin and vitamin A. To meet calcium requirements at least three serves of calcium a day are needed.

1 serve (approx 300mg calcium)

= 250ml full cream milk or *calcium enriched* soy milk

= 200g tub yoghurt

= 200ml custard

= 45g cheese (2 slices)

Easy ways to increase calcium in your child's diet:

- Offer milk instead of cordial or fruit juice (if your child doesn't like plain milk try it with a straw)
- Offer breakfast cereals with milk as a snack
- Use custard, yoghurt or fromage frais for a healthy dessert
- Try cheese sticks in the lunch box
- Try toasted cheese sandwiches for lunch
- Milkshakes and fruit smoothies (made with fresh fruit and milk or yoghurt) make a great snack
- Use milk as much as possible in cooking (soups, sauces, mornays and milk-based puddings)
- Use lots of grated cheese on pasta and pizza or sprinkle on vegetables