



PACKING THE SCHOOL LUNCH BOX

When children eat well they behave better, are able to listen well and concentrate for longer. Packing a healthy school lunchbox will help children to learn and play well and be happy at school.

Steps to planning a healthy lunchbox

1. Make time to prepare. Have fresh fruit and vegetables, milk and yogurt, bread and crackers all bought in advance.
2. Shop wisely and save money. Buy fresh fruit and vegetables in season to ensure good quality and value for money.
3. Make your own snacks. For example snack packs from fresh ingredients which you can buy in bulk.
4. Look after the environment. Put sandwiches and other items in reusable containers. This uses less packaging and creates less rubbish.
5. Choose a variety of foods from the 5 food groups (see table below).
6. Include a bottle of water. No need for sweetened drinks such as juice, cordial or soft drink as these contain too much sugar which are not good for teeth. Non-water drinkers usually start drinking water with the example of other children. Freeze a small quantity each night and top up with cold water in the morning for a cool summer drink.
7. Keep food cool. In warm weather freeze a water bottle or put a small ice pack in the lunchbox.

What makes a healthy lunchbox?

Food Group	Nutrients	Suitable examples to include in a lunchbox
Breads and cereals	Source of carbohydrate which is a major energy source for the brain and body.	All types of bread – whole meal, multigrain, white, pita or other flat breads, fruit loaf. Rice, pasta, crackerbreads or crispbreads, rice crackers.
Fruit	Contains lots of vitamins and fibre. Aim to include 1–2 serves of fruit per day.	Fresh whole fruits or cut up and placed in a container. Dried fruit mix, canned fruit.
Vegetables	Good source of fibre and vitamins.	Vegetable pieces as a snack such as cherry tomatoes, capsicum strips, snow peas, small corn cob or baby corn spears. Carrot, celery and cucumber sticks. Salad vegetables or coleslaw in a sandwich.

Dairy	Major source of calcium. Include one serve in lunchbox every day.	Low fat milk, cheese or yogurt.
Lean meats, fish, poultry, egg, nuts and legumes	Protein for growing bodies.	Cold meats or chicken. Tinned fish such as salmon, tuna or sardines. Boiled eggs, baked beans, hommus.

Remember to involve your children. Take them shopping and let them help choose fruits and vegetables for their lunchbox. Let them help prepare and pack their own school lunchbox.

Author: Nutrition Australia ACT Division, 2013