

Preparing your child's lunchbox

A balanced packed lunch should contain:

starchy foods – these are bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and others

protein foods – including meat, fish, eggs, beans and others

a dairy item – this could be cheese or a yoghurt

vegetables or salad and a portion of fruit

Starchy foods are a good source of energy and should make up a third of the lunchbox. But don't let things get boring.

Instead of sandwiches, give kids bagels, pitta bread, wraps and baguettes. Use brown, wholemeal or seeded bread, not white bread.

Low-fat snacks for kids:

Children often like food they can eat with their fingers, so chop up raw veggies such as carrots or peppers and give them hummus or cottage cheese to dip the veggies in.

Breadsticks and wholemeal crackers are great finger foods that can be spread with low-fat soft cheese or eaten with reduced-fat cheddar and pickles.

Replace chocolate bars and cakes with fresh fruit. Vary the fruit each day and get them to try new things, such as kiwi or melon.

Unsalted nuts are a great snack food for children to have at home, but it's best to leave them out of your child's packed lunch. Many schools ban nuts to protect pupils with a nut allergy.

You could also make up a tasty fruit salad. Be inventive and encourage your children when they try something new.

Note that dried fruit is no longer recommended as a between-meal snack as it's high in sugar and can be bad for teeth.

Making healthier food:

It may take a while for your children to get used to a healthier lunchbox. But it will be worth it for their health, so keep trying.

You can help by eating a wider range of foods at home as a family. For ideas on how to introduce more fruit and veg into your family's diet, read 5 A DAY and your family.

Click on the link below...

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/5ADAY/Pages/Family.aspx>

Reading supermarket food labels can help you buy healthier foods for your child's lunch and family meal times. An easy way to measure sugar is 4g =1 teaspoon

Save chocolate and cakes for occasional treats. Remember to praise your child when they've tried something new to show your encouragement.

Most importantly of all stay positive about your child's healthy choices and eating habits. It is part and parcel of parenting to actively encourage children to be the best they can in all things including their choice off food!

Enjoy!

Michaela and Sharon – School Food Advisors

