

HEALTHY LUNCHBOXES

The following information provides a checklist for parents of the sorts of food that should make up a healthy lunchbox and those products which would be best left out.

Fruit & Vegetables

Fruit and vegetables are a **good source of vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre.**

The more often fruit and vegetables are available and easily accessible for children (chopped up and ready to eat), the more likely they are to eat them. Aim to make fruit and vegetables a part of every meal or lunchbox snack.

YOU COULD TRY:

- Fresh, tinned or dried fruit added to reduced-fat yoghurt.
- Diced fruit in natural juice.
- Pureed fruit.
- Salads.
- Carrot & celery sticks.
- Corn cobs.



Sandwiches & grain-based snacks

Cereals and grains provide a **good source of dietary fibre and nutrients for the body.**

Meals and snacks based on whole grains are the best way to make sure we get enough cereals in our diet.

HEALTHY LUNCHBOX IDEAS INCLUDE:

- Wholemeal sandwiches, rolls or wraps (topped with a healthy topping such as reduced fat cheese, salad vegetables or lean meats).
- Wholemeal fruit bread.
- Wholemeal pasta or noodles.
- Wholemeal crackers.
- Corn or rice cakes.



Meat & meat alternatives

Beef, lamb, pork, fish, poultry, eggs and legumes are a **good source of protein and iron.**

Sausages and processed luncheon meats such as devon, ham or salami can often be high in saturated fat, salt and preservatives. Where possible, look for leaner, reduced fat alternatives.

WHEN PREPARING A MEAL OR SNACK BASED ON MEAT:

- Choose lean cuts of meat which are trimmed of fat.
- Try and include vegetables as part of the meal. For example, you can grate carrot or zucchini into lean meat rissoles or meatballs.



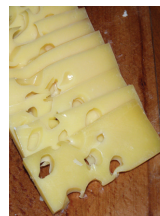
Dairy food

Dairy foods such as milk, yoghurts and cheeses **provide a range of essential vitamins and nutrients including protein and calcium.** Calcium is vital for the health of our bones throughout life. The best dairy foods on which to base meals and healthy lunchbox snacks are low and reduced fat milks, cheeses and yoghurts.

Reduced fat or lite milk products (not skim) should be encouraged for children over two years of age. Reduced fat milk products contain much the same nutrients as full-cream alternatives except they are lower in saturated fat and therefore in energy content. Children under two years of age should consume full cream milk rather than reduced fat, as they have higher energy requirements than older children.

HEALTHY LUNCHBOX SNACKS TO TRY:

- Reduced fat cheese and wholegrain biscuits.
- Reduced fat yoghurts.
- Reduced fat custard with fruit.
- Plain or flavoured milks (the label may not always say 'reduced fat' – try and look for a flavoured milk with 2% fat).



Drinks

Water is the best drink choice for a healthy lunchbox. Water provides the fluid we need without the added sugar and kilojoules that can be found in other drinks such as fruit juices, fruit juice drinks and soft drinks. Fill a drink bottle with tap water for your child's lunchbox. A frozen drink bottle will also help to keep the rest of the food in the lunchbox cool. Tap water also gives us fluoride which helps in the development of strong teeth and bones. Bottled water does not usually have good levels of fluoride.

Milk is a good source of Calcium. Reduced fat or lite milks should be encouraged for children over two years of age. Reduced fat milks contain much the same nutrients as full-cream milks except they are lower in saturated fat and therefore in energy content.



Foods to avoid for your child's lunchbox

Snack foods that are high in added sugar, saturated fat or salt are generally low in nutrients and provide unwanted kilojoules that can contribute to children becoming overweight or obese. Sticky, highly sweetened foods can also cause tooth decay.

The easiest way to restrict less healthy snack choices is simply not to buy them on a regular basis.

The sorts of foods that are best left out of your child's lunchbox, or provided only occasionally, are often the highly processed, packaged products.

Sticky sweet foods:

- Muesli/breakfast bars.
- Fruit bars.
- Fruit filled bars.
- Fruit bars/straps.
- Rice bar treats.



Salty, high fat foods:

- Potato chips/crisps.
- Corn chips.
- Cheesy balls or twists.
- Small oven-baked savoury biscuits.



Sweetened drinks

If provided, juices and highly sweetened drinks should be kept to a minimum and watered down. This includes:

- Cordials.
- Blackcurrant syrups.
- Soft drinks.
- Flavoured mineral waters and sports drinks.



For more information and ideas on healthy eating and physical activity go to www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au

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