

# Healthy Packed Lunch Information and Ideas

## **Keep them fuller for longer**

Base the main lunchbox item on foods like bread, rice, pasta and potatoes. Choose wholegrain where you can.

## **Freeze for variety**

Keep a small selection of different types of bread in the freezer so you have a variety of options – like bagels, pittas and wraps, granary, wholemeal and multigrain.

## **Use a Flask to keep food hot or cold**

Use a flask or insulated cup to keep foods hot such as soup, leftover dinners, lasagne, pasta, etc. Pack leftover cooked chicken, chicken nuggets, or tenders to be eaten chilled or warm in a thermos flask.

## **Cut back on fat**

Pick lower-fat fillings – like lean meats (including chicken or turkey), fish (such as tuna or salmon), lower-fat spread, reduced-fat cream cheese and reduced-fat hard cheese. And try to avoid using mayonnaise in sandwiches.

## **Mix your slices**

If your child does not like wholegrain, try making a sandwich from 1 slice of white bread and 1 slice of brown bread.

## **Always add veg**

Cherry tomatoes, or sticks of carrot, cucumber, celery and peppers all count towards their 5 A Day. Adding a small pot of reduced-fat hummus or other dips may help with getting kids to eat vegetables.

## **Ever green**

Always add salad to sandwiches and wraps too – it all counts towards your child's 5 A Day!

## **Cheesy does it...**

Cheese can be high in fat and salt, so choose stronger-tasting ones – and use less of it – or try reduced-fat varieties.

## **Cut down on crisps**

If your child really likes their crisps try reducing the number of times you include them in their lunchbox, and swap for homemade plain popcorn or plain rice cakes instead.

## **Add bite-sized fruit**

Try chopped apple, peeled satsuma segments, strawberries, blueberries, halved grapes or melon slices to make it easier for them to eat. Add a squeeze of lemon juice to stop it from going brown.

## **Tinned fruit counts too**

A small pot of tinned fruit in juice – not syrup – is perfect for a lunchbox and easily stored in the cupboard.

## **Swap the fruit bars**

Dried fruit like raisins, sultanas and dried apricots are not only cheaper than processed fruit bars and snacks but can be healthier too. Just remember to keep dried fruit to mealtimes as it can be bad for teeth.

## **Switch the sweets**

Swap cakes, chocolate, cereal bars and biscuits for malt loaf, fruited teacakes, fruit breads or fruit (fresh, dried or tinned – in juice not syrup).

## **Yoghurts: go low-fat and lower-sugar**

Pop in low-fat and lower-sugar yoghurts or fromage frais and add your own fruit.

## What Should a Healthy Packed Lunch Contain?

Follow these tips to ensure you include the key nutrients needed to support your child's growth and learning.

### Include starchy foods

**What?** Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta.

**How much?** Include at least one portion.

**Examples:** Sandwiches, pitta bread, wraps, pasta salad, potato salad, sweet potato wedges, rice dishes, couscous, bread sticks, crackers, oat cakes, rice cakes.

**Why?** These foods will provide energy, fuel for vital tissues and organs including the brain, fibre, B vitamins and other minerals.

**Tips:** Try to include some wholegrain varieties from this food group each week such as brown, wholemeal, granary or 50/50 bread, wholewheat pasta or brown rice.

### Pack some dairy and/or alternatives

**How much?** Include at least one portion.

**Examples:** Cheese, yoghurts, custard, rice pudding, milk or yoghurt-based smoothies.

**Why?** These foods provide calcium, B vitamins and protein.

**Tips:** If your child is over two years and growing well opt for semi-skimmed milk and low fat yoghurts and cheeses.

### Don't forget the protein

**What?** Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins.

**How much?** Include at least one portion in every lunchbox.

**Examples:** Chicken, turkey, pork, beef, lamb, beans, fish, shellfish, lentils, chickpeas, pulses, soya products such as tofu, quorn, nuts, hummus.

**Why?** These foods provide protein, iron and zinc.

**Tips:** Try to include at least one portion of fish each week. Oily fish such as fresh, tinned or frozen salmon, sardines, pilchards, mackerel, herring, and fresh tuna may be beneficial for children's cognitive development. Try a salmon or mackerel pate as a dip or sandwich filler.

### Foods to avoid in your child's lunchbox

**What:** Foods high in fat, sugar or salt, **Nuts.**

**Examples:** Crisps, biscuits, cereal bars, chocolate, sweets and other confectionary, fried foods, takeaway or fast food meals, pastries, fizzy drinks or juice style drinks. Peanut butter or any food containing nuts.

**Why?** These foods are often known as empty calories because they provide energy but very few useful nutrients. These foods often contain lots of sugar, salt or saturated fat. Too much sugar can damage children's teeth and too much saturated fat can lead to excess weight gain and poor health.

## Cheap and Healthy Packed Lunch Ideas

### Lunch 1:

Chicken Pasta Salad  
Small yoghurt  
Easy peel fruit (satsuma)

**Total cost 92p**

### Lunch 2:

Wholemeal sandwich thin with olive spread, a slice of ham, grated cheddar and cucumber  
Celery sticks and dip  
Small yogurt  
Plum or Pear

**Total cost 91p**

### Lunch 3:

Small wholemeal wrap with olive spread, mozzarella, sliced fresh tomato and rocket  
Cucumber sticks  
Small yogurt  
Apple

**Total cost 92p**

### Lunch 4:

Wholemeal pitta bread with mayonnaise and leftover roast chicken and cucumber  
25g strawberries or Kiwi fruit  
A yoghurt tube

**Total cost £1.00**

### Lunch 5:

Homemade bacon, egg and cheese muffin  
Carrot sticks and houmous  
Small yoghurt  
Banana

**Total cost 98p**

### Leftover pasta salad

Got some leftover pasta from last night's dinner? Great! Just mix it up with some tuna, mayo, and a selection of your child's favourite veg, and you have a delicious and filling lunchbox pasta salad that will keep hunger at bay until dinner time. Remember, whole wheat pasta is a healthier option, and if your child doesn't like tuna, you can substitute with cooked chicken or cheese.

### Fun-filled pittas

Pitta bread pockets offer an alternative to regular bread and are easy to stuff with a range of interesting and tasty fillings. Is your child a fan of spice? If so, you could fill with spiced falafels and salad, or perhaps piri-piri chicken is more their thing? Again, whole meal pittas are a better choice than white, and remember not to overfill or there might be some soggy lunch boxes!

### Something ricey

Rice is such a versatile ingredient and one which kids of all ages love. Once you have got them used to the idea of eating cold rice, you can quite literally mix it with anything to create a series of yummy lunchbox recipes. Tuna, coronation chicken, grated cheese and tomatoes – the options are endless.

### Funky fruit salad

When it comes to fruit in a kid's lunchbox, the trick is to make it as appealing as possible. Often this means chopping it up small and mixing it together with a range of other fruits to make it colourful and tempting. Try making a batch of fresh fruit salad at the start of the week and pop it in the fridge until you dish it out into tiny containers each day. Easy peelers are great additions, as are apples, chopped grapes, blueberries and mango chunks.

### Rainbow wraps

What's not to love about a wrap! And, especially one that has a variety of colours from the rainbow in it. Why not make it your mission to add as many colours into the wrap as you can with different foods? What about egg mayo with a little ripe avocado and some shredded beetroot? Or, how about salmon, cucumber and mayo mixed with a little turmeric powder to turn it yellow.

### Mad about muesli bars

Homemade snacks don't get easier to make than muesli bars. Plus, some recipes don't need to be baked at all. You can add oats, seeds, raisins, or other fruit, blended together with either honey or maple syrup – please **DO NOT INCLUDE ANY NUTS!**

### Go bananas

Bananas are a wonderful fruit that all kids seem to love. Plus, there are so many things you can do with them – even when they have gone a bit brown! You could make homemade banana bread, banana rice pudding, banana pancakes or banana cookies – all great treats to pop in for a surprised kid.





KEY: DF = Dairy-free EF = Egg-free GF = Gluten-free V = Suitable for vegetarians VV = Suitable for vegans  
 £ = 40p to 69p ££ = 70p to 99p £££ = £1.00 to £1.30

Chicken tortilla, carrot and green pepper sticks, satsuma segments and Greek yoghurt

EF ££



- 1/4 cooked breast of chicken (40g), cut into strips
- 1/8 cucumber, cut into thin strips
- 1 tortilla or wrap
- 3 baby carrots (40g), topped and tailed, washed, and cut in half lengthways
- 1/4 green pepper, washed and cut into sticks
- 1 satsuma or clementine, divided into segments
- 1 large tablespoon (40g) Greek yoghurt

Rice and peas, jerk chicken, sweetcorn, tomatoes and mango

DF EF GF £££



- 3 tablespoons rice and peas (100g) (See recipe below.)
- 40g jerk chicken
- 4 baby sweetcorn, steamed and cut in half (50g)
- 3 cherry tomatoes, quartered (30g)
- 1/4 mango, cut in cubes or slices (50g)

RECIPE

Rice and peas

This recipe makes 4 portions of about 100g.

- 5 tablespoons water (150ml)
- 100ml coconut milk (1/4 of a 400ml can)
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 4 tablespoons dried white rice (120g)
- 4 tablespoons drained red kidney beans (100g)

1. Mix the water with the coconut milk and dried thyme, and add the rice.
2. Bring the mixture to the boil and then simmer for 15 minutes, stirring regularly until the rice is tender.
3. Add the kidney beans and stir well.

Dahl, chapatti, rice and tomato, and soya yoghurt with grapes

DF EF V VV £



- 1 small chapatti (30g)
- 2-3 tablespoons dahl (80g) (See recipe below.)
- 1-2 tablespoons cooked white or brown rice (50g)
- 3 cherry tomatoes, cut into quarters (30g)
- 2 tablespoons soya yoghurt (60g)
- 10-12 grapes, halved (40g)

RECIPE

Dahl

This recipe makes 4 portions of about 80g each.

- 75g red lentils
- 300ml water
- 1/2 onion, diced
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic paste
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder

1. Place all the ingredients in a pan and bring to the boil.
2. Simmer for 15 minutes until the lentils are soft.

Cheese and cucumber sandwiches, green beans and red pepper, and rice pudding with raisins

EF V £



- 1 wholemeal roll
- 1 tablespoon grated cheese
- 6 slices cucumber
- 10 green beans
- 5 strips pepper
- 2 tablespoons (60g) rice pudding with raisins (See recipe below.)

RECIPE

Rice pudding with raisins

This recipe makes 4 portions of about 60g.

- 60g pudding rice
- 250ml semi-skimmed milk
- 80g raisins

1. Place the pudding rice and semi-skimmed milk in a pan and slowly bring to the boil, stirring all the time.
2. Simmer gently for about 15 minutes until the rice is softening, stirring regularly.
3. Add the raisins and cook for a further 5 minutes.
4. Cool before serving.