

Healthier packed lunches for children



What you need to know

Eating well is important and when children eat well, it gives them the nutrients and energy to develop, be active, grow and stay healthy. An enjoyable, healthy lunch box gives children the energy they need to learn and play at nursery.

Nursery is full of new experiences. Having a packed lunch at nursery will be another new learning experience.

This leaflet will help you think about the healthy options when making a packed lunch for your children.

We understand that children with medical needs, special educational needs and disabilities may have a limited or special diet.

If this is the case, we are happy to make allowances through discussions with staff.



A healthy, balanced and nutritious packed lunch should include foods from the following four food groups;



1. Starchy food such as bread, potatoes, rice, pasta - these foods provide carbohydrate to give your child energy for the afternoon.



2. Fruit and vegetables - these foods provide vitamins and minerals to help protect against illness.



3. Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein - these foods provide protein, iron and zinc to help your child grow.



4. Milk and dairy foods - these foods are a good source of calcium, for strong bones and teeth.



Foods and drink high in saturated fat, sugar (and/or salt) - try to limit these types of food and drink. Too much salt and saturated fat can increase the risk of some illnesses in later life while too much sugar can damage children's teeth.

Preparing for packed lunches:



- It needn't be a chore making lunches. You could include your child in shopping, choosing and preparing what they have in their lunch box (give them choices within the food groups above and on the next page.)



- Vary lunch box contents so the children have a good balance of nutrients.



- Don't worry if they can't open or peel food items, staff will be there to help them. However, please ensure foods such as grapes/ cherry tomatoes/ strawberries/ large blueberries are cut in lengthwise and into quarters to avoid the risk of choking.



- Label your child's packed lunch box/bag.



- Inform the nursery of any food allergies or intolerances.



- In hotter weather, think about keeping the packed lunch cool by adding a slim ice pack or investing in an insulated box/bag.



-Please bear in mind that your child's stomach is the size of their fist so don't overload their lunch box.

Healthy packed lunch ideas

Each day, a healthy packed lunch should include:

A portion of starchy food



White or wholegrain bread, rolls, pitta bread, crackers or wraps, plain naan bread, bagels, cooked pasta, rice, noodles, couscous or potato as a salad.

A portion of meat, fish, eggs, beans or other non-dairy sources of protein



Sliced meat, chicken, fish, sliced egg in sandwiches, rolls or wraps, meat alternatives such as tofu or pulses like kidney beans and chickpeas in salads.

At least one portion of fruit and/or vegetable



Fresh, frozen, canned or dried - these can all count towards 5-A-DAY.

Vegetables: carrot, cucumber, pepper or celery sticks, tomatoes, grated carrot in sandwiches or wraps, sweetcorn, peas or pulses in salad.

Fruits: sliced apple or melon, plums, grapes (**cut in lengthwise & in quarters**), banana, pear, strawberries, kiwi, satsumas, chunks of pineapple or dried fruits, chopped up satsumas.

A portion of milk or dairy foods



Yoghurt or fromage frais, cheese in sandwiches or wraps or milk based dessert like rice pudding.

A drink - to help with

hydration and concentration

- ☒ Water is the best choice
- ☒ Diluted fruit juice (half juice, half water)
- ☒ Limit squash and flavoured water, even if labelled 'sugar free', 'no added sugar' or 'reduced sugar'. These can contribute to tooth decay and have little nutritional value.
- ☒ Fizzy drinks

Desserts, cakes, biscuits and crisps: these foods are high in saturated fat, sugar and salt - too much of these foods can be harmful to health.

- ☒ Try to make desserts, puddings and cakes with fruit or milk such as banana muffin or rice pudding.
- ☒ Limit confectionary, chocolate or cereal bars to help protect your child's teeth.
- ☒ Avoid salty snacks such as crisps every day. Replace with plain breadsticks, or crackers.
- ☒ No sweets
- ☒ **No nuts**, including products such as Nutella, or peanut butter.



Other options could be slices of malt loaf, teacakes or fruit breads. The children could have hummus or cottage/soft cheese to dip raw veggies in, such as carrots, peppers or celery.

Water is provided at the lunch table daily



My Healthy Lunchbox

