



# HEALTHY LUNCHBOXES

There are many foods that can be used to pack a healthy lunchbox.

## Fruit & Vegetables

Fruit and vegetables will provide a good daily source of vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre.

All chopped fruit and vegetables can be easily packed into small containers for the lunchbox, making them quick and easy to eat.

### LUNCHBOX IDEAS:

- cucumber, carrot and celery sticks (steam carrot and celery until tender for younger children), corn cob, snow peas, green beans, cherry tomatoes, capsicum strips.
- fresh fruit eg apple, pear, kiwi fruit, strawberries, orange, grapes and bananas
- tub of diced fruit in natural juice
- dried fruit *occasionally* – eg mini box of sultanas or a few dried apricots or apple rings
- salad filling in a sandwich, wrap or roll (eg lettuce, grated carrot, avocado, cucumber)



## Meat & other protein foods

Meat and other protein foods provide protein and iron. Limit the use of sausages and processed luncheon/deli meats (eg devon and salami) as they are high in saturated fat and salt.

### LUNCHBOX IDEAS:

- cold roast beef, lamb, pork, chicken, tuna or salmon as a filling in sandwiches, rolls and wraps or added to salad
- hardboiled egg in salad, sandwiches or for a snack
- baked beans, lentil patty
- left-over casserole, rissoles, meatballs, bolognese sauce, stirfry with tofu

## Dairy Food

Dairy foods, such as milk, yoghurt, custard and cheese are an important source of protein and calcium. Reduced fat milk and dairy foods (approx. 2% fat) are suitable for most children over 2 years of age.

### LUNCHBOX IDEAS:

- cheese slice, cheese stick or cubes of cheese as a snack with cucumber slices and cherry tomatoes
- cheese in sandwiches, rolls and wraps or on crackers or rice cakes
- yoghurt or custard (small tub or pouch)
- plain milk (small UHT poppers of plain milk are easy to add to lunchboxes)
- calcium-enriched soy alternatives (soy milk, soy yoghurt)

## Breads & Cereals

Bread, grains and cereal foods provide important nutrients and energy for busy, growing children. Wholegrain or wholemeal varieties are the best choices.

### LUNCHBOX IDEAS:

- sandwiches, rolls, wraps, pita bread
- fruit bread, scone, pikelets
- crackers, corn and rice cakes, breadsticks
- rice, noodles, pasta





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### Water

Water is the best thirst quencher and the best choice of drink for every lunchbox. Tap water is safe so you do not need to buy bottled water.

#### LUNCHBOX IDEAS:

- freeze a water bottle overnight; it will help to keep the rest of the lunchbox cool
- pack a water bottle even if you are sending milk – the milk can be consumed at morning tea or lunchtime and the water at other times of the day when your child is thirsty



### TIP:

Don't pack too much food or too many choices, as this may be overwhelming for a young child. You only need to provide enough food and drink for 1 snack and 1 main meal. If your child is at the service for extended hours, pack enough for 2 snacks and 1 main meal.

### Food and drinks to leave out of the lunchbox

Snack foods and drinks that are high in added sugar, saturated fat or salt are generally low in nutrients. They also provide a lot of kilojoules that can contribute to children becoming overweight or obese. We call these 'sometimes' foods and drinks because they should only be consumed sometimes and in small amounts. Sticky, sweet foods can also cause tooth decay.

#### Sticky or sweet foods:

- lollies, chocolates, jelly cups
- cakes, doughnuts, sweet muffins
- plain sweet/cream-filled biscuits
- muesli /cereal bars
- fruit bars and fruit straps

#### Salty, high fat foods:

- potato chips
- corn chips
- cheesy balls, twists
- small oven-baked savoury biscuits
- devon and salami

#### Sweetened drinks:

- cordial and soft drink
- fruit juice
- flavoured mineral water
- fruit juice drinks
- sports drinks

It is best not to pack these 'sometimes' foods and drinks in lunchboxes. If you do occasionally put a 'sometimes' food or drink in the lunchbox, keep it to a very small portion only.

**Note about food allergies:** Some services may ask families not to pack specific foods to ensure a safe environment for children with severe food allergies. Please discuss these needs with your service staff.