



Packed Lunch Ideas

Staying for lunch is an exciting time as the children learn to eat independently and enjoy the social aspects of mealtimes.

This leaflet aims to give you more information on what to pack to ensure your child enjoys a healthy and nutritious meal.



Spending the day learning and playing requires the right sort of fuel

Your child will have been very active all morning and therefore it is essential at lunch time they receive the right nutrients to refuel.

Good nutrition is proven to raise levels of concentration and improved learning as well as healthy physical growth and development.

Lunch boxes can be a tricky area. But it's important to load up your child's lunchbox with tasty food that is both healthy and appealing.

What should be in a lunch box?

A portion of protein, e.g. lean meat, fish, egg, hummus, cottage cheese

Starchy food – wholegrain roll, tortilla wrap, pitta, pasta or rice salad.

Fruit and/or vegetables

A portion of milk or dairy food

A drink – water is ideal

What should I include in my child's lunch?



If it's going to be sandwiches, make them attractive – maybe try small shapes using cookie cutters or make small pinwheel sandwiches using flat bread.

Suggested Fillings:

- lettuce, ham & cheese
- cottage cheese & cucumber
- marmite, lettuce & cheese
- chicken, celery & mayonnaise
- mashed egg & salad
- tuna & sweetcorn

Alternatives:

- Crackers, savoury scones, (but don't forget to include a portion of protein (e.g. chunks of cheese, hard-boiled egg, hummus).
- Leftover rice or pasta dishes
- Couscous or pasta salad
- Rice cakes

Fruit & Vegetables

Young children love small items that they can eat as finger food – a great opportunity to work in fruit and vegetables!

- Sliced – apples, oranges, pears
- Easy to peel mandarins
- Grapes, strawberries, kiwi fruit
- Fruit salad or tinned fruit (in juice)
- Vegetable or fruit kebabs
- Baby carrots, cherry tomatoes, peas in the pod, cucumber chunks.

Top Tips:

- Really think how much you put in; children love finger-sized bites – in exciting tubs to open.
- If wrapping foods, use easy-to-open foil, rather than cling film and loosen caps to help children become independent with their lunch.
- Vary the contents daily – the same food every day is dull and is not helping your child to broaden their palate.
- Water is the best thirst-quenching drink.

Milk and Dairy Foods

- Chunks of cheese
- Baby Bell or cheese strings
- Fromage frais
- Yoghurt
- Milk
- Cottage cheese with dipping vegetables

Is there anything I should avoid putting in a packed lunch?

Young children need a richly varied and nutritious diet. Foods that are highly processed and contain large amounts of additives, salt and sugar should be avoided.

Please restrict crisps, biscuits and cakes etc to an occasional treat and we also have a policy in place to protect those who may have nut allergies (possibly as yet undetected) – so **no nuts or nut products at all, please.**

What sort of lunchbox shall I use?

We are unable to refrigerate lunch boxes, so we would advise that you buy an insulated bag or box. However, many of these are huge and designed for teen-children or adults; remember your little ones have small stomachs so don't need big portions, but they do need foods that pack in a lot of nutrients.

Please be sure to:

- **include an ice pack in warmer weather**
- **name the box/bag and all small containers**
- **include a spoon for yoghurts**
- **avoid nut products**

It's a good idea to separate the lunch into sections – so the children know what to eat first, e.g. savoury in a tub and then yoghurts and fruit separately.

Useful websites and books:

- www.eatwell.gov.uk
- www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/
- <http://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/school-packed-lunch-inspiration>