

Tips for Lunch Boxes

Here are some suggestions for what to pack each day:

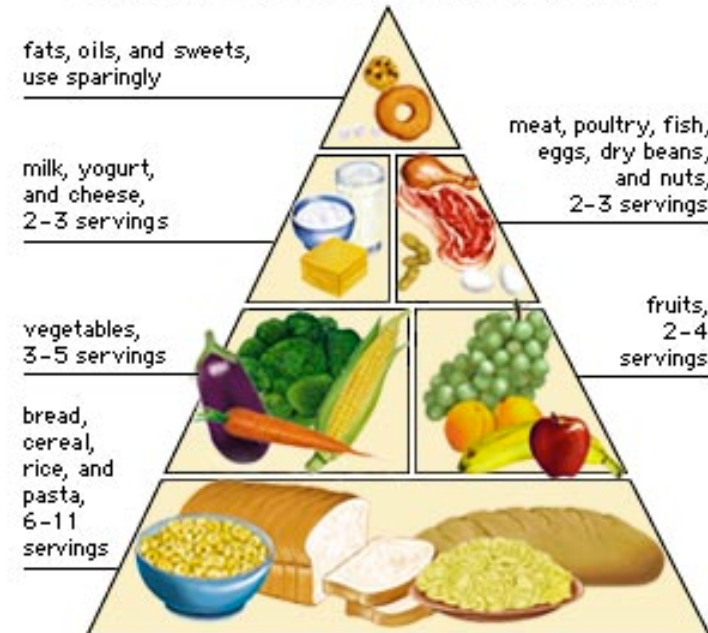
Main	Sandwich, cheese & crackers, salad, dip with crudité's
Fruit	Some fruit (peeled and cut into bite-sized portions if easier for your child)
Snack or Treat	Real fruit breakfast bar, popcorn, pretzels, fromage frais
Drinks	Water or pure juice (avoid boxes of juice that say "juice drink" as this means that sugar is added).

How much?	Pack according to your child's appetite. Children often enjoy variety, so small portions of several different kinds of foods may work best
Containers	Use disposable bags for sandwiches and fruit, and plastic sealable containers for salads (please remember to label all containers, cutlery, lunch boxes etc.)
Lunch Boxes	'Cool-box' style, or soft and insulated, lunch boxes are usually best for keeping food fresh
Bread	Vary the bread as much as you can. Try to buy grainy or wholemeal (vs. white bread) for sandwiches

Tips and Ideas For Healthy Lunch Boxes

1. Try to ensure that your child eats a wide variety of foods to ensure that their bodies receive the necessary balance of nutrients
2. Resist highly-processed food (e.g. crisps, soft drinks) - fresh food is best!
3. Try and give foods from all of the different food groups each day
4. Please do not put nuts or chocolate in lunch boxes.

Original USDA Food Guide Pyramid



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

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Tips for Healthy Eating

Fruit

Use with fruit salads, muffins and snacks, or with cottage or ricotta cheese

Try to leave the skin on fruit wherever possible to ensure your child eats more fibre

Here is a list of some of the fruits that go well in lunch boxes in sandwiches, salads, dips or snacks and their benefits:

Blackberries	Excellent source of Vitamin C Good for immunity and healthy skin
Blueberries	Very high in antioxidants Excellent for skin, digestion, kidneys, bones, amongst others!
Raspberries	Very rich in calcium
Strawberries	Contain Vitamin K, which allows calcium to be absorbed and benefits immune system
Bananas	Good slow-release energy food
Mangos	Great source of beta carotene for eyes
Pineapple	Rich in enzymes for reducing inflammation
Cherries	High in antioxidants
Kiwi	Huge amount of Vitamin C
Oranges	High in Vitamin C
Pears	Especially good for the digestive system after a period of illness
Watermelon and Peaches	Good source of Vitamin C
Apples	Best known for detoxifying capabilities and aiding digestion
Grapes	High in antioxidants, especially red grapes
Apricots	Very rich in iron
Plums	Best known for their fibre; they aid digestion
Avocados	Very high in Vitamin E

Fats

Children **NEED** fat for development of hormones, the brain and nervous system. There are two types of fat - essential fatty acids and saturated fats. Children need both types. The former are also known as Omega-3 and Omega-6 oils, which are found in fish,

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oily seeds and whole grains. The latter are derived from red meat, poultry and dairy products. Children need less of this type of fat. Beware of hydrogenated fat, which is used in a lot of processed foods like crisps. Too much of this fat can block absorption of the "good" fat.

Vegetables

Vegetables can be added to sandwiches, salads or dips, or used alone as a snack.

Carrots	One carrot supplies an entire day's beta carotene needs, which strengthens eyes
Spinach	Best known for iron and calcium to strengthen bones and teeth
Sweet peppers	Good source of beta carotene
Broccoli	Strong in antioxidants
Peas	Improves heart and eyesight
Sweetcorn	Good for energy and fibre
Asparagus	Good detoxifier and high in antioxidants
Green beans	Very rich in fibre
Beetroot	Rich in iron
Cabbage	Good for bones, blood and circulation
Celery	Reputed to be good for sore throats because of antiseptic properties
Tomatoes	Very high in Vitamin C
Courgettes	Good for immunity, nervous and digestive systems
Rocket	High levels of Vitamin C
Cucumber	Good for digestion and bones (leave the skin on)

Salt

Should you use salt in children's food? The British Food Standards Agency recommends:

- **Children under five** No added salt
- **Ages six – seven** Up to three grams per day

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- **Ages seven - ten** Up to five grams per day
- **Ages eleven and up** Up to six grams per day

N.B. Six grams is about one teaspoon

Processed food is notorious for containing a lot of sodium (salt) so the less your child eats the better. If you make the food yourself you can control the quantities. Too much salt in a child's diet can cause heart and blood pressure problems in later life. A little salt is needed in a balanced diet - you can't cut it out altogether - but you get most of what you need without adding too much more.

Sugar

It's fine for children to have some sugar, but **in moderation!** Too much has the potential to cause adult diabetes and obesity. The most immediate effect can be hyperactivity. Processed snacks and drinks are the worst offenders for providing excess sugar. If you see sugar listed as one of the first three ingredients then you know it's bad!