

The Healthy Packed Lunch Guide

1

CHOOSE A STARCHY CARBOHYDRATE

Starchy carbohydrates provide energy, fibre, and B vitamins - examples: rice, pasta, bread, couscous, wraps, pitta, potatoes and chapatti.

TOP TIP: Provide a variety of wholegrain (brown) and white starchy foods each week



Early years: provide wholegrain (brown) starchy foods occasionally - the high fibre content can make children feel full before they meet their energy needs.

2

ADD A VEGETABLE OR SALAD

Vegetables and salads are important sources of vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre.

Ideas: lettuce, spinach, cucumber sticks, grated carrots, tomatoes, sweetcorn and pepper strips, green beans, peas and watercress.

3

SELECT A SOURCE OF PROTEIN

These foods provide protein, iron and zinc.
Good source of protein: meat, eggs, fish, quorn, tofu, kidney beans, lentils, reduced sugar baked beans, chickpeas, butter beans, haricots, cannellini beans, flageolet beans and pinto beans.

TOP TIP: Occasionally add oily fish (herring, pilchards, salmon, sardines, sprats, trout and mackerel) to packed lunches. They provide omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin A and vitamin D.



Provide oily fish no more than twice a week.

4

ADD NATURAL SWEETNESS!

It is best practice to provide a main meal and nutritious dessert for lunch.

Fruits are an important source of vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre - examples: apple, pear, banana, clementine, grapes, orange, kiwi, frozen berries, canned fruit (in fruit juice)



If providing dried fruit, offer at mealtimes only.

5

LEVEL UP WITH A SOURCE OF DAIRY AND ALTERNATIVES

It is best practice to provide a portion of dairy and alternatives at lunch as they are a good source of energy, protein, calcium, and vitamin A.

Ideas: cheese, milk, plain yoghurt, plain fromage frais, rice pudding, semolina pudding custard.

TOP TIP FOR DAIRY-FREE DIETS: Opt for plain, unsweetened calcium-fortified alternatives (Soya, Almond and Oat)

6

ADD A DRINK

Healthy options include water or milk.

REMEMBER: Lunch is an important meal providing children with the energy and nutrients they need to continue throughout the afternoon. Following these steps and providing a variety of foods in a child's lunchbox will ensure healthy growth and development.