

the lunch bunch factsheet



Preparing a well-balanced packed lunch every morning, especially one your children will eat, can be a challenge.

balancing act

A packed lunch should provide approximately one-third of your child's daily nutritional needs – for children aged between 5-8 years old that works out at 523 calories, for children aged 9-12 years it is 583 calories. However, calories are not the only factor to consider – a packed lunch also needs to contain protein for growth and repair of tissues, carbohydrates for energy, calcium for healthy bones and teeth and fruit and vegetables for vitamins and minerals.

lifting the lid on lunch boxes

A healthy lunch box should contain foods from the following 4 main food groups. Processed foods which are high in fat, sugar or salt should be avoided as much as possible

1. Starchy Carbohydrate

Bread (white or wholemeal, sliced or rolls) or use pasta, rice, couscous, bulgur wheat or new potatoes to make a salad. Use wraps, bagels, pitta bread or bread sticks to provide variety. White bread is fortified with calcium, iron and B vitamins.

2. Fruit and Vegetables

Add salad to sandwiches and rolls, plus canned sweetcorn, peas, diced pepper or cucumber to pasta/rice salads. Add a few cherry tomatoes or crunchy carrot sticks or strips of red pepper to add colour and texture.

3. Protein

Ham or cooked chicken, hard boiled eggs, canned tuna or salmon, prawns, hummus, or try adding lentils or beans to salads.

4. Dairy Foods

Milk, cheese (Cheddar, Edam, soft cheese) fruit yogurt, fromage frais, drinking yogurt or a pot of rice pudding.

5. A drink

Children are much more susceptible to dehydration than adults so don't forget to include a drink. Avoid fizzy drinks as they tend to be high in sugar. Water, milk, fruit juice and dilute squash are all good choices.



the lunch bunch factsheet



sandwich ideas

- Hummus and grated carrot
- Low fat soft cheese and cucumber or roasted pepper
- Egg and cress
- Brie and mango chutney
- Chicken tikka and cucumber
- Tuna, mayonnaise and sweetcorn
- Apple and peanut butter (dip apples in a little lemon juice to stop them from going brown)
- Low fat soft cheese and wafer thin ham or turkey
- Roast chicken and fruity coleslaw (add a handful of raisins or some chopped ready-to-eat dried apricots to a basic coleslaw)

tips for healthy lunchboxes

- A healthy lunch box doesn't have to be a boring lunch box. Try to offer a variety of foods throughout the week to stop children getting bored
- Make sure a packed lunch looks good as well as tastes good by including a variety of different colours and textures
- Get kids involved in helping to decide what they would like in their lunch box. Draw up a weekly menu to make sure lunches are varied
- To keep food cool until lunch time, pack food in an insulated cool bag with an ice pack or add a frozen carton of juice (wrapped in kitchen roll to prevent dripping). The carton will have defrosted by lunchtime

nutritional guidelines for school lunches

Nutritional guidelines per lunch for 5-to-8 year-olds

Energy 523kcal	Fat 20.3g
Saturates 6.4g	Carbohydrate 69.7g
Protein at least 7.2g	Salt no more than 1.2g

Nutritional guidelines per lunch for 9-to-12 year-olds

Energy 583kcal	Fat 22.7g
Saturates 7.1g	Carbohydrate 77.7g
Protein at least 10.5g	Salt no more than 1.65g

For more information on putting together healthy pack lunches plus menu ideas go to www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk