

HEALTHIER LUNCHBOX CHECKLIST

Aim to include:

1. a good portion of starchy food, e.g. wholegrain bap, thick sliced wholemeal bread, chapatti, pitta pocket, pasta or rice salad;
2. two or three portions of fruit and vegetables, e.g. an apple, satsuma, handful of cherry tomatoes or carrot sticks or small box of raisins;
3. a portion of semi skimmed milk or dairy food, e.g. reduced fat cheese portion, pot of yogurt or fromage frais;
4. a portion of lean meat, fish or alternative, e.g. ham, chicken, beef, tuna, egg, or hummus;
5. a drink, e.g. unsweetened pure fruit juice, semi skimmed milk, water or yoghurt drink.

Enjoy your lunch!

(The checklist applies to all healthy children over five years of age, and can be gradually applied for pre-school children. When choosing products for healthier lunchboxes, you should try to choose those lower in salt, fat and sugar.)

SOME SUGGESTIONS

1. Carbohydrates

To ensure your child has enough energy to keep going all afternoon, it is important to ensure the lunchbox includes a good portion of starchy foods. *Some suggestions are:*

- Different types of bread, such as granary, wholegrain, soft grain, baguettes, poppy seed bread, bagels, pitta bread and wraps. For more fibre choose wholegrain varieties or those with added seeds. Fibre, wholegrain and wholemeal varieties are important to keep the gut healthy. If your child does not like wholemeal bread, try making sandwiches with one slice of white and one of wholemeal, or use white bread with added fibre;
- Pasta and rice salads, e.g. tuna and sweetcorn pasta, ham and pepper rice salad;
- Noodles, crackers, couscous and potatoes;
- Crispbread, chapattis, bagels and rice cakes make an interesting change.

2. Fruit and Vegetables

The target of eating '5 a day' is for fruit and vegetables together.

What counts as a portion?

As a rough guide, a child's portion of fruit and vegetables is the quantity of fruit or vegetable that comfortably fits in his or her hand.

Some suggestions are:

- a satsuma;
- small banana or an apple;
- a small box of raisins;
- a handful of cherry tomatoes;
- a slice of melon;

Adding fruit to a lunchbox is the easy part. Vegetables can be trickier so here are some ideas:

- Add sweetcorn and diced cucumber to tuna;
- chunks, slices or sticks of cucumber;
- sticks of carrot or red and yellow peppers (these are sweeter than green peppers);
- Roasted vegetable and bean pasta salad;
- Sweet potato wedges and tomato salad;
- Slice of vegetable quiche.



3. Calcium

It is important for school-age children to eat a well balanced diet providing adequate calcium, as this is when bones are developing.

Some suggestions are:

- Semi-skimmed milk or flavoured milk drink (with less than 5% added sugar);
- Low fat fruit yogurts or fromage frais or a yogurt drink (with less than 5% added sugar);
- Mini cheeses or a piece of unprocessed cheese;
- Low fat cream cheese dips with bread sticks.

4. Protein

Protein is an important nutrient for school-age children as it is necessary for the growth and repair of body tissues.

Some suggestions are:

- Lower fat choices include lean meats such as slices of chicken, turkey and ham.
- Other good fillings for sandwiches include tuna, crabsticks, sardines, boiled egg, cottage cheese, edam and mozzarella.
- Oily fish such as sardines and salmon are good sources of omega-3 fatty acids which may help to maintain a healthy heart.
- It is particularly important for vegetarians to ensure they include alternative sources of protein in their diets. Good choices include mixed bean salad, chick peas and hummus.

5. Drinks

A lunchbox is not complete without a drink. As over half the human body is made up of fluid it is essential that we keep our bodies well hydrated. Being well hydrated has been linked with better concentration and learning.

Some suggestions are:

- unsweetened pure fruit juices;
- flavoured waters or low sugar squashes;
- bottle of water;
- milk;
- flavoured milk (with less than 5% added sugar);
- yogurt drinks (with less than 5% added sugar);
- fruit smoothies
- adding a frozen carton of drink to the lunchbox - this is a good way of keeping them cool.

Useful websites:

Food in Schools www.foodinschools.org
British Nutrition Foundation www.nutrition.org.uk
Food Standards Agency www.food.gov.uk