

## Healthy Packed Lunches



Packed lunches don't have to be boring. With a little thought and imagination they can be fun, healthy and tasty too.

Just include something from each of the four main food groups – starchy carbohydrates (bread, rice, potatoes, pasta), fruit and vegetables, protein containing foods (meat, fish, eggs and beans), and milk and dairy foods - pop in a drink and away you go!

### Start with the basics - bread, cereals and potatoes

Starchy carbohydrates are a really important part of a healthy diet and should make up about a third of the food we eat.

You should include a little at each meal to keep your energy levels up during the day.

- Try to keep a selection of breads in the freezer for sandwiches and choose wholegrain varieties when you can. Using a different type of bread each day can make sandwiches more interesting. Try multigrain and seed rolls, bagels, bread rolls, baguettes, pitta breads, wraps, crackers or oat cakes..... the list is endless!

- You could also raid the fridge for leftovers! Alternatively, cook extra pasta, couscous, rice or potatoes and mix it with cut-up vegetables, a few nuts or tuna, then just add your favourite low-calorie dressing.

### Add a tasty filling - meat, fish and alternatives

Try to include lean meat, chicken, fish, eggs, nuts, beans or pulses in your lunchbox because they are a great source of protein which is needed for the growth and repair of your body. Try:

- Tuna with cucumber, green pepper, sweetcorn or tomato
- Choose oily fish such as tinned sardines or mackerel on toast once or twice a week. A great source of Omega-3 which is good for keeping your heart healthy.
- Egg mayonnaise and cucumber
- Cottage cheese and dried apricots
- Cooked chicken or turkey, mustard, tomatoes and lettuce
- Peanut butter and banana
- Ham, cheese and tomato
- For beans and pulses try lentil soup, houmous with red pepper or a mixed bean salad

Remember if you are using a spread to choose a reduced fat one - or do without it completely if you are using a moist filling.

### Feeling fruity?

It's important to eat five (or more) portions of fruit and vegetables every day. Below are some good ideas to get plenty at lunchtime:

- Sliced salad vegetables in sandwiches – such as cucumber, tomato or avocado
- Chopped raw vegetable crudités e.g. carrot sticks, cherry tomatoes, or a mixed salad. These can be great for dipping in houmous, low-fat cream cheese or cottage cheese.
- Fresh fruit e.g. apple, grapes, banana, kiwi fruit
- Dried fruits e.g. raisins, apricots



“ Fancy something extra in your lunch-box? There's nothing wrong with this. Just try and make healthier choices when you can ”



Avoid soft and fizzy drinks that are high in added sugars, instead choose from:

- Plain water (still or sparkling)
- Plain milk (skimmed or semi-skimmed) or plain yoghurt combined with fruit e.g. smoothies, pureed fruit with plain yoghurt
- Pure fruit juice in small cartons (150ml) or in a small bottle which will also count towards one of your five-a-day! But it will only ever count as one portion no matter how much you drink!
- Low calorie squash or diet drinks - small cans are now available
- And don't forget a flask for hot drinks or soup in the winter

### Remember to keep your lunch cool

- Use a cool bag and pop in an ice-pack or freeze a carton of juice and place in with food to keep cool.
- Keep in the fridge until morning if you make it the night before.
- Don't store your lunch next to a radiator or in the sun.

- tinned fruit in natural juice – the cheapest option is to decant into a small container, alternatively buy in small tins with a ring pull

### Dairy delights

Try to include some dairy products in your lunchbox as calcium is important to keep your teeth healthy and your bones strong:

- low fat yoghurt -plain or fruit
- low fat fromage frais
- small pot of rice pudding
- Glass of milk – plain or flavoured



Remember, cheese in a sandwich will also count.

### Added extras

Fancy something extra in your lunch-box? There's nothing wrong with this. Just try and make healthier choices when you can:

- Currant bun, scone or fruit loaf
- Reduced fat crisps
- Plain popcorn
- Plain biscuit e.g. digestive
- fun sized bar of chocolate

### And finally, if you haven't already done so - put in a drink

It is important to stay hydrated during the day – current recommendations are to drink six to eight glasses of water (or other fluids) a day. When the weather is warm or if you are more active you may need more.

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