



Tips for packing a nutritious, yummy and rubbish free lunch

All parents want the best for their kids, especially when it comes to food. Yet packing a lunch that will be enjoyed can be a challenge sometimes, as kids at school have many distractions that compete with eating during the allocated time.

So to help parents, we have come up with some ideas to help you pack healthy and delicious lunches. Not surprisingly, since fresh or 'nude' foods are much more nutritious and contain much less additives than packaged foods, healthy lunches are nearly always rubbish free too.

Getting ready—What do you need to put the goodies in?



- Have a range of different sized reusable boxes (say a set of three) or a single compartmented box, to separate dry and wet goodies.
- An insulated bag with an ice pack is essential for meat & dairy products.
- For drinks, use a medium to large reusable water bottle (stainless steel or non-leaching, BPA free plastic) and a smaller reusable bottle for milk or juice.
- When shopping, buy unpackaged goods or bulk buy (e.g. a large tub of yoghurt rather than single portioned ones; >1L bottle of juice rather than mini cartons or bottles), so you minimize the amount of packaging waste.

Bread, Rolls, Wraps and Bagels



- Go for varieties: wholemeal, multigrain, rye, 12 cereal Vienna, cheese and chives, pumpkin, croissant, bagel, pitta pocket, Lebanese, rice, corn or barley wrap, focaccia, olive piatto, and many more... Your child's got to love some of these!
- To add interest for younger kids, cut the bread up in different ways and shapes.

Fillings



- Cheese slices and carrot or red capsicum sticks
- Cream cheese, chopped celery and sultanas
- Grated carrot, goat cheese and a couple of olives
- Roast meat (cold) with beetroot, lettuce and chutney
- Lean ham (cold) and pineapple or capsicum rings

- Two sardines or some salmon (put these in a small box) and cucumber slices
- Sliced (or whole) boiled egg, lettuce and grated beetroot
- Peanut butter (check for class policy about bringing nut products which may cause allergic reactions to some kids) and sliced banana
- Vegemite (or Promite) and tomato (kids love uncut cherry tomatoes)
- A thin layer of butter or avocado spread helps keep sandwiches from going soggy.

Side Dishes, Exotics and Treats



- A boxful of mixed seasonal fruit (e.g. melon balls, grapes and strawberries)
- Half an avocado (in its shell, drizzled with lemon juice to avoid discolouring) or yellow capsicum filled with cottage cheese, plus a few nachos
- Cooked veggies (e.g. crunchy broccoli, cauliflower, purple cabbage, beetroot, roast pumpkin, snow peas, a small corn cob), baked beans or chick peas
- A cooked drum stick (cold) with fried onion and crispbreads or crackers (avoid overly salted crackers or crisps)
- Fried rice (cold) with peas, corn, chopped capsicum and onion
- Cherry tomato, peas and tuna pasta
- Lebanese bread with hommos and tabouli rolled up
- Your child's favourite sushi (avoid seafood unless it can be stored in the fridge)
- A small bottle of homemade chocolate milk (keep in fridge or freeze overnight)
- A homemade muffin with sultanas, chopped pumpkin, zucchini or other goodies
- A small box (reusable) of fruity yoghurt (keep in fridge or freeze overnight)
- A few dried fruit (dates, apricots, prunes...)
- A muesli or breakfast bar, only occasionally, as most of these have high sugar content. Avoid chewy sticky or chocolate bars which are harmful to young teeth.
- Avoid individually wrapped muesli bars, biscuits, cheese and dips as these wrappings are not recyclable.

The choice of lunch box ingredients is limited only by your and your child's imagination - be creative! For more ideas and tips, check out these websites:

www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetailsKids.aspx?p=335&np=284&id=1811

www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au/hav/articles.nsf/pages/Healthy_lunch_boxes_for_children?open

www.healthinsite.gov.au/topics/Healthy_Lunch_Boxes

www.freshforkids.com.au/lunch_box/lunch_box.html