

Lunch boxes - menu planner

Summary

- Use a menu planner to prepare healthier options for all school lunches.
- Offer children different healthy lunch box choices to build healthy eating habits.
- Healthy lunches and snacks help children concentrate and play throughout the day.

Healthy lunches and snacks help children concentrate, learn and play throughout the day. We know that children need to eat plenty of fruit and vegetables every day, as well as wholegrains, milk products (including cheese and yoghurt), meat and meat alternatives and water. You can include all of this in your child's lunch box and still make it fun and interesting to eat.

By planning ahead, you can make sure that your child's lunch box has each of the six key elements of a healthy lunchbox. These elements are:

- fresh fruit
- fresh crunchy vegetables
- milk, yoghurt or cheese (you can use reduced-fat options for children over the age of two years). For children who cannot tolerate milk products, offer appropriate alternatives like calcium fortified soy or rice drink, or soy yoghurt.
- a meat or meat alternative food like some lean meat (for example, chicken strips), hard boiled eggs, hummus or peanut butter. If your school has a nut-free policy, peanut butter and other nuts should not be included in your child's lunchbox.
- a grain or cereal food like bread, a roll, flat bread, fruit bread or crackers (wholegrain or wholemeal choices are best)
- fresh tap water.

Try some of these 'everyday' combinations and take the hard work out of deciding what to put in your child's lunch box. Why not prepare lunch the night before to save time and get the kids to help?

School lunch menu planner

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning snack	Apple or mandarin	Celery boats filled with low-fat cream cheese and sultanas	<u>Ham and zucchini</u> <u>muffin</u>	Snow peas and sliced capsicum with low-fat <u>creamy capsicum</u> <u>dip</u>	Small bunch of grapes

Lunch	Two sushi hand rolls with vegetables and chicken filling. Vegetable sticks with hummus dip .	Wholegrain roll filled with shredded roast chicken (no skin) and one cup of coleslaw with low-fat dressing.	Pinwheel sandwich. Layer a slice of wholegrain flatbread with avocado, grated carrot, cucumber and lettuce, then roll up and cut in half. For variety and extra flavour, add sliced falafel balls to the sandwich	Wholegrain sandwich filled with mashed boiled egg, lettuce, avocado and alfalfa	Sesame chicken wrap. Spread tortilla bread with reduced-fat tzatziki and fill with slices of sesame chicken, diced tomato, cucumber and spinach leaves
Afternoon snack	Reduced-fat fruit yoghurt	Piece of fruit such as a kiwi or pear	Apple slices, cherry tomatoes and cubed low-fat cheese	Fresh sliced melon or fruit salad	Oat bran and apple muffin
Drink	Water	Water	Water	Water	Water
Tip	Buy some premade vegetable and chicken sushi the day before and keep in the fridge for lunch the next day	Use a water bottle that your child can refill throughout the day	Muffins can be frozen individually. For healthy savoury muffin recipes, visit the Better Health Channel recipe page	Choose fresh fruit or canned fruit in natural juices. Dried fruit is sticky and high in sugar so it should only be eaten occasionally	Cook Sesame chicken for dinner the night before, making sure that there is enough left over for lunch the next day. You can also cook a bulk batch of chicken and freeze sandwich-sized serves to use later on

Remember that not all children go to school with lunch boxes filled with chips and lollies, despite what your children might think and say. Changing children's food preferences and habits can take time, but children will learn to eat what is familiar to them, so it is important to keep offering different healthy lunch box choices. It may take a little while, but with time, your children can learn to love eating a healthy lunch every day.

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This school lunch menu planner is a great way to help you get started with planning healthier school lunches. Now that you're on the right track, try mixing and matching food ideas to make lunch boxes varied and interesting. Start

with some of the healthy suggestions on the [Healthy ideas for school lunches](#) webpage.

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

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