

Guidance from www.nhs.uk

School meals are a great choice for your child, but if you choose to make a packed lunch for them instead here are some tips for preparing a healthier lunchbox.

What to include in your child's lunchbox

A healthier lunchbox should:

- be based on [starchy carbohydrates](#) (bread, potatoes, rice, pasta)
- include fresh fruit and vegetables/salad
- include a source of protein such as [beans and pulses](#), eggs, fish, meat, cheese (or dairy alternative)
- include a side dish such as a low-fat and lower-sugar yoghurt (or dairy alternative), tea cake, fruit bread, plain rice/corn cakes, homemade plain popcorn, sugar-free jelly
- include a drink such as water, skimmed or semi-skimmed milk, sugar-free or no-added-sugar drinks

The [Eatwell Guide](#) shows you how to have a healthy balanced diet and can help you decide what to put in your child's lunchbox.

Find healthy lunchbox ideas at [Change4Life](#).

Healthier snacks

Children often like food they can eat with their fingers. Try these ideas:

- **Chop up raw veggies** – such as carrots or peppers, and give them hummus or cottage cheese to dip the veggies in.
- **Chop up fruit** – such as apple, satsuma segments, strawberries, blueberries, halved grapes or melon slices. Add a squeeze of lemon juice to stop them from going brown.
- **Breadsticks and wholemeal crackers** –make great finger foods. Try spreading low-fat soft cheese on them.
- **Choose malt loaf, tea cakes, fruit breads or fruit** – instead of cake, chocolate, cereal bars and biscuits. Fruit can be fresh or canned (in juice, not syrup).

Dried fruit is not recommended as a snack between meals as it's high in sugar and can be bad for teeth, but it's OK when eaten as part of a meal.

Try these ideas for [healthy food swaps](#).

More healthy lunchbox tips

It may take a while for your child to get used to a healthier lunchbox but keep trying. These tips may help:

- Get your children involved in preparing and choosing what goes in their lunchbox. They're more likely to eat it if they helped prepare it.
- Get ideas on [how to introduce more fruit and veg into your family's diet](#).
- Read supermarket [food labels](#) to help you buy healthier foods for your child's lunch and family mealtimes.

Learn more about [healthy eating](#).