

The Guide to Packing Lunchboxes.

Schools & Kindergarten

Children get about 30% of their daily food intake at school, making it crucial to pack their lunchboxes with nutritious options that support their learning, growth, and overall health. A well-balanced lunchbox should include whole foods from all five core food groups. Whether the food is packed from home or prepared on-site, it's important that what children eat at school meets their nutritional needs while also considering their social and cultural preferences. This guide equips parents with the tools to pack healthier lunchboxes, empowering them to make nutritious food choices that support their children's growth, learning, and overall well-being.



Find out more at:
www.nationalnutritionfoundation.org.au



Preparing for school.

⦿ What break times does your school have?

Is it recess and lunch or two shorter 'lunches'? How long do kids have to eat and play? Many kids want to use as much time to play so consider this when packing their food. They might be better off having a few smaller meals/snacks rather than larger meals. Smaller meals/snacks can also be a great way to get kids to eat a wider variety of foods from the 5 food groups.

⦿ What equipment do you need?

It is good idea to have a chat with your child about their preferences and also take into consideration the break schedule of the school to work out what type of container/equipment to use. Some options include bento style lunchbox, thermos, insulated lunch bag, ice bricks and don't forget a drink bottle! Make sure you consider your child's ability to open containers. Can they do it on their own? Are they able to open screw top containers?

⦿ Practice at home before school starts

Practice using any containers that might need opening/closing. This also gets kids familiar with the types of foods they might have in their lunchbox and how it is presented.



What to pack.

Foods from the 5 core food groups & limit packaged processed foods.



Serve sizes.

How many serves each day?

Age	Fruits	Vegetables	Grains	Dairy	Meat & alt.
4-8	1.5	4.5	4	1.5-2	1.5
9-11	2	5	4-5	2.5	2.5-3

What does a serve look like?

Fruit



1 medium



2 small



1 cup



125mL occasionally

Vegetables



1 cup



1/2 cup



1/2 medium



1/2 cup

Grains



1 slice



1/2 cup cooked



1/2 cup cooked



2/3 cup

Meat & alternatives



65g



80g



100g



2 large



1 cup

Dairy & alternatives



1 cup



2 slices



3/4 cup

Mix n' Match.

Fruit. 1	Vegetables. 2	Milk, Yoghurt and Cheese. 3	Meat and Meat Alternatives. 4	Grain and Cereal Food. 5
<p>FRESH FRUIT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apple • Banana • Mandarin • Orange quarters • Passionfruit halved • Watermelon, honeydew, rockmelon chunks • Pineapple chunks • Grapes • Plums • Nectarines, plums, peaches • Strawberries • Blueberries • Cherries • Kiwi fruit • Pear <p>MIXED FRUIT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit salad • Fruit kebabs <p>DRIED FRUIT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dried fruit, nut, popcorn mixes <p>TINNED FRUIT/FRUIT CUPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In natural juice (not syrup) 	<p>RAW VEGIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corn cobs • Carrot sticks • Capsicum sticks • Cucumber sticks • Celery sticks • Green beans • Snow peas • Cherry tomatoes • Mushroom pieces <p>Serve with a veggie based dip or salsa...</p> <p>SALADS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coleslaw and potato salad • Mixed bean salad • Pesto pasta salad <p>BAKED ITEMS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grilled or roasted vegies • Wholemeal veggie muffins • Zucchini slice <p>SOUP (in thermos)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pumpkin soup • Potato and leek soup • Chicken and corn soup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk • Calcium-enriched plant based milks • Yoghurt (frozen overnight) • Cheese cubes, sticks or slices • Cottage or ricotta cheese • Cream cheese • Tatziki dip <p>Can serve with...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit • Wholegrain cereal • Veggie sticks • Rice/corn cakes • Wholegrain wheat crackers <p>Don't forget a water bottle for refilling throughout the day!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tinned tuna or salmon in springwater • Lean meats (e.g. beef, chicken, kangaroo) • Falafel balls • Lean meat patties • Lentil patties • Lean deli meats (e.g. chicken, turkey) • Boiled eggs • Baked beans • Tofu • Hommus dip • Lean meat kebabs • Peanut butter • Vegetable fritata • Skinless chicken drumstick • Homemade pizzas with lean meat & vegies <p>Can serve with...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholegrain roll, sandwich or wrap with salad • Rice/corn cakes • Wholegrain wheat crackers • Side salad • steamed or roasted vegies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bread, rolls, wraps, pita, bagels, English muffins (preferably wholemeal or wholegrain) • Pasta dishes • Rice, quinoa, cous cous dishes • Noodle dishes • Sushi <p>SAVOURY BAKED ITEMS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homemade pizzas • Wholemeal savoury muffins • Pasta bake <p>SWEET BAKED ITEMS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit loaf • Wholemeal fruit based muffins <p>SNACKS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cereal • Crackers • Popcorn • Crispbreads • Rice/corn cakes • Pikelets • Crumpets • Wholemeal scones



Label Reading.

- ⦿ Always read the per 100g (or 100ml) column to compare similar products because the serve sizes can be different.
- ⦿ Always compare similar products, for example compare one brand of yoghurt with another brand of yoghurt.



1 tsp = 4 grams

NUTRITION INFORMATION		
Servings per package: 24		
Serving size: 30g		
	Quantity per Serving	Quantity per 100g
Energy	441 kJ	1470 kJ
Protein	3.8 g	12.5 g
Fat, total	0.4 g	1.2 g
- saturated	0.1 g	0.3 g
Carbohydrate, total	19.9 g	66.3 g
- sugars	0.8 g	2.8 g
Sodium	81 mg	269 mg
Fibre	3.1g	10.4

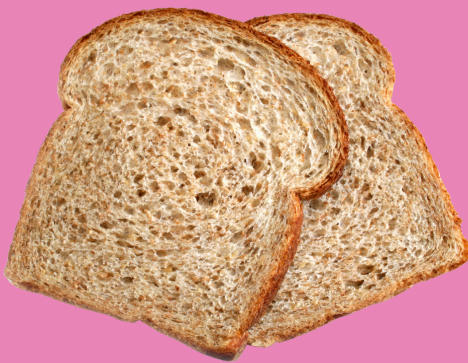
Sandwich Filling Ideas.

Sandwiches, rolls and wraps are a common lunchbox staple and can be very nutritious if made with the right ingredients

Pick and mix from the list below to make a nutritious and filling lunch for your child.

1. Bread, wrap or roll

Choose a wholemeal, wholegrain or high fibre variety.



2. Spreads

- Avocado
- Hummus
- Tzatziki
- Cottage cheese
- Reduced fat cream cheese
- Reduced fat mayonnaise



3. Protein source

- Barbecue chicken (skin removed)
- Leftover meat e.g., meat patty, grilled chicken, roast beef
- Turkey
- Boiled egg
- Canned tuna or salmon
- Tofu
- Falafel
- Mashed chickpeas
- Cheese



4. Salad filling

- Lettuce
- Spinach
- Grated carrot
- Tomato
- Cucumber
- Avocado



Assemble.

Tips for Packing a Lunchbox

Save Time:

- Prepare a large platter of cut up fresh fruit and vegetables early in the week.
- Prepare lunchboxes the night before while preparing dinner.
- Consider what lunches you will be preparing throughout the week and buy the necessary ingredients when you do your food shopping.

Engage:

- Encourage children to help prepare their lunchbox, by choosing a selection of fresh fruit and vegetables from the platter. This way they are more likely to enjoy the food in their lunchbox as they were involved in the process.
- If your child is just starting school, don't include too much food as it may be overwhelming.

Reduce waste:

- Utilise leftover dinners such as pasta or rice dishes in the lunchbox the next day.
- Pack food in reusable containers to avoid excess packaging and rubbish.
- Talk to your child about what and how much food they want packed to avoid waste and fear of disappointment for not eating everything.

Budget:

- Making homemade vegetable or fruit slices/muffins/breads is more cost effective and nutritious than pre-prepared varieties.
- Buy fresh fruit and vegetables that are in season as they will be better quality and cheaper.
- Avoid portioned packaged snacks foods, buy in bulk and portion yourself.
- Use frozen and canned products.
- Shop the sales and catalogues.

Food safety:

- Use an insulated lunchbox, ice packs or freeze a small water bottle to keep food cool.
- Encourage your child to eat perishable foods at the first break e.g. dairy or meat products.