

# FACT SHEET



## HEALTHY LUNCHBOXES

The following information provides a guide for the sorts of foods that should make up a healthy lunchbox and those products that are best left out.

### Fruit & Vegetables

Fruit and vegetables are a **good source of vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre.**

Chop fruit and vegies for the lunchbox so that it's quick and easy to eat.

#### LUNCHBOX IDEAS:

- snack packs of carrot and celery sticks (for older children only), corn cob, snow peas, cherry tomatoes, cucumber
- pieces of fresh fruit eg. apple, pear, kiwi, strawberries, orange, grapes and bananas
- diced or chopped fruit in natural juice
- dried fruit – not every day as they are sticky
- salad filling in a sandwich, wrap or roll



### Breads & cereals

Breads & cereals -are a good source of nutrients and help to fill hungry children. Use wholegrain or wholemeal varieties to boost dietary fibre.

#### LUNCHBOX IDEAS:

- sandwiches, rolls, wraps
- fruit bread, scones, pikelets
- crackers, dry biscuits, rice cakes
- rice, noodles, pasta



### Meat & other protein sources

Meat & other protein sources- lean meat, fish, chicken, eggs and legumes are a good source of protein and iron. Limit the use of sausages and processed luncheon meats such as devon and salami as they are high in saturated fat and salt.

#### LUNCHBOX IDEAS:

- lean beef, lamb, pork, chicken (trimmed of fat), tuna or salmon - filling in sandwiches, rolls and wraps or added to salad
- cooked egg in salad or sandwiches
- baked beans, lentil patty
- left-over meat-based casserole, rissoles, meat-based pasta sauce



For more information and ideas on healthy eating and physical activity go to [www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au](http://www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au)



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## Dairy Food

Dairy foods - such as milk, yoghurts and cheeses are a good source of essential vitamins and nutrients including protein and calcium. Calcium is vital for building strong, healthy bones throughout life. Use reduced-fat milk and yoghurt (approx 2% fat) for children over 2 years of age as it contains the same essential nutrients but less fat and kilojoules.

### LUNCHBOX IDEAS:

- cheese slices or cubes as a snack with cucumber slices and cherry tomatoes
- cheese as a filling in sandwiches, rolls and wraps or on dry biscuits
- yoghurt or custard in small tubs with or without added chopped fruit
- plain milk
- calcium-enriched soy alternatives ( soy milk, cheese and yoghurt)



## Water

Water – is the best thirst quencher and therefore the best choice for the lunchbox. Tap water is safe to drink and provides fluid without the added sugar and kilojoules found in sweet drinks. Tap water in most areas contains fluoride which helps the development of strong bones and teeth.

### LUNCHBOX IDEAS:

- freeze the water bottle overnight; it will help to keep the rest of the lunchbox cool
- pack a water bottle even if you are sending milk – the milk can be consumed at morning tea or lunchtime and the water at other times of the day when your child is thirsty



## Food to leave out of the lunchbox

Snack foods and drinks that are high in added sugar, saturated fat or salt are generally low in nutrients and provide lots of kilojoules that can contribute to children becoming overweight or obese. We call these 'sometimes' foods and drinks because they should only be consumed sometimes and in small amounts. Sticky, sweetened foods can also cause tooth decay.

### Sticky sweet foods:

- lollies, chocolates
- cakes, doughnuts
- sweet/cream-filled biscuits
- muesli /rice bars
- fruit bars and straps

### Salty, high fat foods:

- potato chips/crisps
- corn chips
- cheesy balls, twists
- small oven-baked savoury biscuits

### Sweetened drinks

- cordials & soft drinks
- fruit juice
- flavoured mineral water
- fruit juice drinks
- sports drinks

It is best to restrict 'sometimes' foods and drinks in lunchboxes. If you do occasionally put a 'sometimes' food or drink in the lunchbox, keep it to a small portion only.

**Note about allergies:** Some services may ask parents not to pack specific foods to ensure a safe environment for all children, including those with severe allergies. Please discuss these needs with your service staff.



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