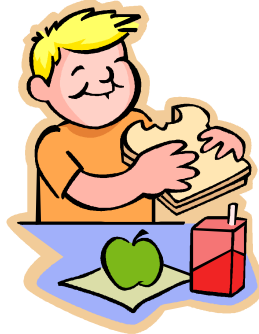




## Ideas for Healthier Packed Lunches



School lunches have been placed at the forefront of the Governments agenda after research concluded that children were not making healthy food choices at lunchtime and that school meals did not meet their nutritional needs. This led to the introduction of new legislation for school lunches from September 2006, whereby all local authority schools need to comply.

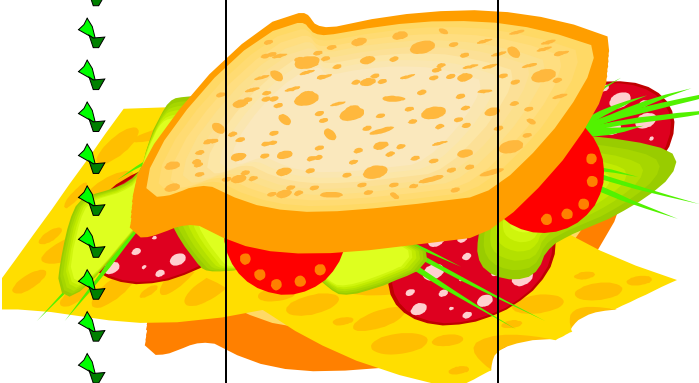
If your child takes a packed lunch to school you can help support the new standards by providing a healthy nutritious lunch.

### Did you know

Children's lunch boxes often contain manufactured snack foods, which are generally high in salt, sugar and fat (some of these products aimed at children contain up to 2 g of salt, that's just under half the recommended maximum amount of salt per day for a child between 7-10 years of age!). This level is very high especially when it is only one item from their lunch, remember that's not even taking into account foods consumed at breakfast, dinner and any possible snacks in between! Manufactured foods also contain a mixture of food additives including, preservatives, flavour enhancers and sometimes colourings. Certain foods of this nature fill your child up with "empty calories", they are fine to have occasionally as treats but where possible you should try and avoid including these as part of the everyday diet. Below is a table, which lists, common foods found in children's lunch boxes along with ideas on how you could swap these foods for alternatives, which will provide your child with a healthy lunch, as well as keeping the cost down!

Current popular items in lunchboxes	The main things to watch out for in these products	Healthier alternatives	Nutrients contained in the alternatives
Crisps	Salt and fat levels	Plain rice cakes Plain popcorn (Unsalted/unsweetened/non-flavoured varieties) Seeds (supermarkets have a wide range)	Rice Cakes: Carbohydrate  Seeds: Protein, Fibre, Vitamins and Minerals including Vitamin E

Strip Cheese	Additives and high Salt content in some varieties	To cut a small cube/section from a block of cheese you buy for the family. Or include a small pot of cottage cheese in your child's lunchbox (diced fruit or vegetables can also be added and this will count towards part of their daily fruit and vegetable intake).	Cheese: Protein, Calcium, Vitamin A, D and B12  Fruit: Fibre, Vitamins, Minerals and Antioxidants.
Lunchbox alternatives to sandwiches including Lunchables Stackems Dunkers  Sausage rolls	Salt content and various additives  Fat, salt	Sandwiches are better replacements for these types of food. They need not be boring either because there are now a range of breads available on the market including; multi grain, wholemeal, varieties of bagels, pitas, raisin breads and wraps. These can be filled with low fat sandwich fillings including; Lean meats such as ham, turkey or chicken.  Fish including canned salmon, tuna sardines  Cheese such as cheddar, edam or mozzarella.  Eggs	Bread: Carbohydrate, Fibre and B Vitamins  Lean meats: Protein, Vitamins B, D Iron and Zinc.  Fish: Protein, and Iodine. Oily Fish (canned salmon and sardines) contains Omega-3, Vitamin A & D  Cheese: Protein, Calcium, Vitamin A, D and B12  Eggs: Protein, Vitamin A, D, B12, and Niacin
Chocolate bars, biscuits and cakes	Sugar and fat levels Hydrogenated oil	Fruit buns, flapjacks, oatcakes, malt loaf, scones, banana cake. Dried fruits such as figs, apricots, and raisins are a good healthy substitute.	Fruit cakes: Carbohydrate, Fibre, B Vitamin  Dried fruit: Fibre, Vitamin B
Juice drinks including fruit shoot, five alive, cordial squashes	Sugar and/or artificial sweeteners, (small % of fruit juice) additives including preservatives and colourings. Contain little nutritional content but contribute to	Water, 100% fruit juice including drinks that are freshly squeezed as well as juice from concentrate and 100% fruit/vegetable smoothies.  Milk, and milkshakes without added sugar are good alternatives.	Fruit Juice: Vitamins, Minerals and Antioxidants.  Milk: Protein, Calcium, Vitamin B12, Riboflavin, Magnesium and Zinc.



Energy drinks	hydrating the body  Caffeine and sugar/ artificial sweeteners		
Spreads and Dressings	High in fat	When using mayonnaise or dressings in a sandwich, you could choose a reduced variety. Instead of using a butter or margarine spread with mayonnaise, you could just use either a spread or salad dressing.	Spreads: Fortified spreads often contain Vitamins A and E.

### Other ideas

If your child is fed up with sandwiches, wraps and bagels you could try giving them a small container of pasta, couscous, noodles or rice. The great thing about these foods is you can save some of the meal you prepared the night before so while it is easy for you, your child is also getting a nutritious lunch. What's more if you have made it yourself you know exactly what's in it!

### Tip for children who will not eat fruits and vegetables.

Where possible try and add diced fruit and/or vegetables to your child's lunch (i.e. in sandwiches, pasta, rice and couscous lunches) the vegetables and fruits are easily disguised in these dishes and if they like the main component of the meal they are more likely to eat them.



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