Healthy packed lunch tips: A simple guide to support families

This guide complies with school food standards and offers tips on how to do a packed lunch on a budget, as well as suggestions on how to make lunches more inspring.

One portion of whole grains & one source of protein:

- Three bean pasta salad
- Jollof rice
- Rice & peas
- Roast chicken sandwich
- Cheese quesadilla
- Wholemeal pitta and hummus
- Chicken salad
- Vegetable noodles
- Chickpea and potato curry
- Pitta pizzas
- Tuna and pasta salad
- Cheese roll ups
- Soup and crackers
- DIY Tacos
- Black bean burger
- Roast plantain wedges
- Salmon and cream cheese bagel
- Lentil and sweet potato dhal
- Tuna and bean salad
- Ham and cheese sandwich
- Chickpea and vegetable wrap
- Roast vegetable and turkey pasta
- Potato and cauliflower curry
- Cucumber and hummus wraps

At least one portion of vegetable & one portion of fruit:

- Bell pepper
- Carrots
- Celery
- Peas
- Corn
- Broccoli
- Cherry tomatoes
- Kale crisps
- Salad
- Cucumber
- Cauliflower
- Spinach
- Courgette
- Green beans
- Beetroot
- Radish
- Grapes
- Banana
- Orange
- Pineapple
- Cherries
- Mango
- Raspberries
- Strawberries
- Blackberries
- Dried fruit
- Tinned fruit (not in syrup)
- Apple
- Pear
- Papaya
- Apricot
- Melon

One snack:

- Small bag of popcorn
- Small pieces of cheese
- Crackers
- Low fat & sugar yogurts (check the food label is green)
- Malt loaf
- DIY fruit crunch pots
- Brown, plain rice cakes
- Dried fruits (sultanas, raisins)
- Edamame beans

Lunchbox ideas and recipes: www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/

Tips to make a balanced packed lunch:

- Pick a main that includes wholegrain & protein, a selection of fruit & vegetables, one snack and water.
- Ensure fruit and vegetables are always included in a packed lunch.
- Choose wholegrain (bread, pasta, rice) as increased fibre will keep your child fuller for longer.
- Swap out sugary fruit juices, smoothies & fizzy drinks for water, or add fresh fruit to water such as strawberry, oranges or lemons.
- Replace crisps, cheese strings, cookies and sweets with some of the healthier snacks suggested.

Tips to create a healthy packed lunch on a budget:

- Keep different types of wholegrain bread products in the freezer so you have a variety of options that will last longer – bagels, pittas, sliced loaf, wraps.
- Use leftover veg/roast meat from the day before to make cold pasta salads or sandwiches.
- Buy tinned fruit in juice (not syrup) and frozen/tinned vegetables - they are just as nutritious!
- Buy a steel water bottle for your child rather than using disposable plastic water bottles - it's better for the environment and saves money in the long run.

Tips to help your child enjoy packed lunches:

- Involve your child with making their lunch - cutting the fruit/veg or adding salad to their wrap (do it the day before and squeeze some lemon on the fruit to keep it fresh).
- Dipping foods are fun for kids and a happy change from a sandwich every day. Provide a low fat dip such as hummus or tzatziki so they can dunk their carrots or peppers.
- Taste the rainbow - try a variety of different fruits and vegetables for a visually fun packed lunch.
- If you have the time, try cutting fruit and vegetables into shapes.