



# BALANCING THE LUNCHBOX

**Good for kids**  
good for life



**Health**  
Hunter New England  
Local Health District

The lunchbox suggestions provided in this resource may not be in line with your service's individual allergy policy or nutrition guidelines. Please check with staff at your service regarding suitable foods.

# EVERYDAY FOOD FOR THE LUNCHBOX: GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT

**PACK MOSTLY BREADS / CEREALS**

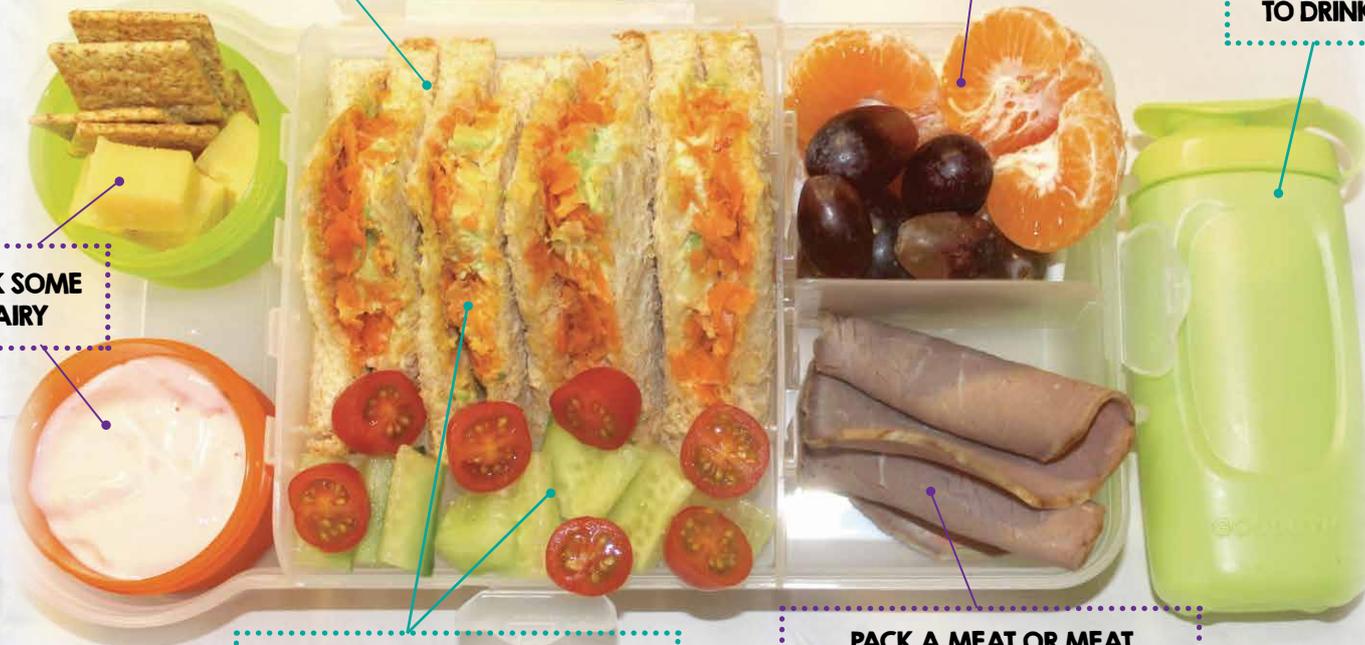
**PACK A SERVE OF FRUIT**

**PACK WATER TO DRINK**

**PACK SOME DAIRY**

**PACK MOSTLY VEGETABLES**

**PACK A MEAT OR MEAT ALTERNATIVE** eg. baked beans



# CHOOSING HEALTHIER PACKAGED FOODS

Use these nutrition guidelines when choosing packaged foods

	Per Serve serving size 23.2g (4 crackers)	Per 100g
Energy (kJ)	364 kJ	1579 kJ
Protein (g)	2.8 g	12.2 g
Fat - total (g)	2.2 g	9.4 g
Fat - saturated (g)	0.3 g	1.1 g
Carbohydrate - total (g)	14.4 g	62.3 g
Carbohydrate - sugar (g)	0.4 g	1.8 g
Sodium (mg)	105 mg	452 mg
Fibre (g)	3.1 g	12.0 g

Use the “per 100g column” to compare similar products.

Aim for foods with no more than **20g fat per 100g**.

Products with less than **10g of fat per 100g** are best.

Aim for foods with no more than **5g of saturated fat per 100g**.

Products with less than **3g per 100g of saturated fat** are best.

Products with less than **15g per 100g** are best.

Aim for foods with no more than **600mg of sodium per 100g**.

Products with less than **400mg of sodium per 100g** are good choices.

Not all labels include fibre. Bread, crackers, pasta, rice and cereals may be more likely to have fibre listed.

Products with **3g or more fibre per serve** are best.

# HEALTHY LUNCHBOX IDEAS

## Toddler Friendly Lunchbox

Cream cheese, avocado and  
grated carrot sandwich

Tomato wedges, cucumber and rockmelon

Boiled egg\*

Cheese stick and rice crackers

Plain milk popper and water to drink

\*Check your service's policy on packing eggs

**BE WARY**  
of choking hazards for  
younger children. Cut up foods  
like cherry tomatoes and  
grapes and cook hard foods  
like carrot sticks so they are  
softer to chew.

## Pasta Lunchbox

Leftover home-made pasta salad

Grapes and kiwi fruit

Scone

Cheese stick

Plain milk popper and water to drink

**REMEMBER**  
Adjust the amount and  
texture of food to be  
appropriate for your child's  
age and appetite

# HEALTHY LUNCHBOX IDEAS

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## Lunchbox from the Pantry

Baked beans

Bread and margarine

Salad of grated carrot, tinned corn, grated cheese and lettuce

Tinned peaches

Wholemeal crackers with vegemite

Plain milk popper and water to drink



## Fish Lunchbox Idea

Tinned tuna

Vegemite and grated cheese sandwich

Vegetable sticks

Banana and kiwi fruit

Rice crackers

Yoghurt

Water to drink

# HEALTHY LUNCHBOX IDEAS

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## **Cheap & Tasty Lunchbox**

- Egg\* and lettuce roll
- Four bean mix and tomato salad
- Tinned fruit
- Yoghurt
- Custard
- Water to drink

\*Check your service's policy on packing eggs



## **Deli Wrap Lunchbox**

- Turkey wrap with avocado, alfalfa and cranberry jam
- Veggie sticks
- Cheese and crackers
- Grapes
- Yoghurt
- Water to drink

# HEALTHY LUNCHBOX IDEAS

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## **Weekend Leftovers Lunchbox**

- Chicken skewers and home-made fried rice
- Mandarin
- Pikelets
- Celery sticks with cream cheese
- Yoghurt
- Plain milk popper and water to drink



## **Leftover Roast Dinner Lunchbox**

- Roast chicken, lettuce and cheese
- Left over roast vegies
- Banana and grapes
- Yoghurt
- Home-made banana and oat muffin
- Water to drink

# RECIPE IDEAS

## Vegetable Slice

**Makes:** 8 serves

**Prep time:** 10 minutes

**Cooking time:** 30-40 minutes

- Ingredients:**
- 4 eggs, lightly beaten
  - ½ cup self raising flour
  - 1 medium zucchini, grated
  - ½ cup corn kernels
  - ½ cup peas
  - 1 medium carrot, grated
  - 2 tomatoes, diced
  - ¾ cup reduced fat cheese
  - 3 Tablespoons vegetable oil

**Method:** Preheat oven to 180°C. Beat eggs, oil and flour together until smooth. Add zucchini, corn, carrot, peas, tomato and cheese and combine. Pour into a dish (approx. 15cm x 30cm) lightly sprayed with oil or lined with baking paper. Bake for 30-40 minutes.



### Try:

- Using different combinations of vegetables
- Adding half a cup of ricotta or feta cheese to the mixture
- Serving warm with a jacket potato and greens for dinner
- Serving cold with a side salad in the lunchbox

# RECIPE IDEAS

## Tuna Pasta Salad

**Makes:** approx 4 child-sized serves

**Prep time:** 8 minutes

**Cooking time:** 12 minutes (to cook pasta)

- Ingredients:**
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup pasta shapes, cooked per packet instructions
  - 95g tinned tuna
  - $\frac{1}{2}$  cup tinned corn kernels, drained and rinsed
  - 1 stick of celery, diced
  - 12 cherry tomatoes, halved

### Optional dressing:

- 1 Tablespoon of olive oil
- Juice from  $\frac{1}{4}$  lemon
- Cracked pepper to taste

**Method:** Combine tuna, corn, celery and tomatoes with slightly cooled cooked pasta shapes. Shake together the olive oil, lemon juice and pepper in a small jar. Pour over salad if desired.



### Try:

- Other vegetables in this salad such as grated carrot, cucumber or capsicum
- Using shredded chicken instead of tuna
- Using your child's favourite salad dressing instead of oil and lemon

# RECIPE IDEAS

## Berry Ricotta Muffins

**Makes:** 12  
**Prep time:** 15 minutes  
**Cooking time:** 20 minutes

- Ingredients:**
- 80g margarine, softened
  - 175g ricotta
  - 1/3 cup tightly packed brown sugar
  - 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract
  - 2 eggs
  - 1 cup plain self-raising flour
  - 1/2 cup wholemeal self-raising flour
  - 1 teaspoon cinnamon
  - 1/3 cup milk
  - 3/4 cup berries (fresh or frozen)

**Method:** Preheat the oven to 180°C. Beat together margarine, ricotta, sugar and vanilla essence with an electric mixer until light brown and creamy. Add eggs, beating in one at a time until combined. Add the flours, cinnamon and milk and fold in gently until just combined. Stir in berries. Spoon the mixture between 12 muffin pans (muffin pans should be well greased or lined with paper muffin cups). Bake for 20 minutes or until golden brown and firm to touch.



### Try substituting berries with:

- 1 large ripe mashed banana OR
- 1/2 cup of apple puree & 1/4 cup sultanas OR
- 3/4 cup of fresh strawberries

# RECIPE IDEAS

## Pork and Vegetable Meatballs

**Makes:** 24

**Prep time:** 10 minutes + 20 minutes to set

**Cooking time:** 5-7 minutes

- Ingredients:**
- 500g lean pork or chicken mince
  - 1 small onion, grated or finely chopped
  - 1 carrot, grated
  - 1 zucchini, grated
  - 1 Tablespoon of worcestershire sauce
  - 1 Tablespoon of tomato sauce
  - 1 Tablespoon of oil

**Method:** Using clean hands, combine mince, onion, zucchini, carrot and sauces in a medium bowl. Roll into approximately 24 meatballs. Place in fridge to set for about 20 minutes. Add the oil to a frying pan and fry meatballs in batches, turning regularly for about 5-7 minutes until cooked through. If meatballs are for the lunchbox, refrigerate until required. Use within 3 days.



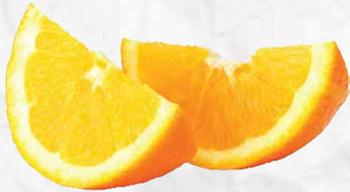
### Tip:

These meatballs can be frozen cooked or raw for approximately 1 month. If freezing raw, store in a single layer. Defrost overnight in the fridge. Cook raw meatballs according to recipe instructions.

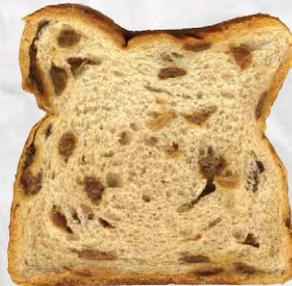
### Remember:

Keep meatballs cold in an insulated lunchbox. If the lunchbox cannot be refrigerated throughout the day, also use an ice brick.

# HEALTHY SNACK IDEAS



✓ Best left in



# SNACKS BEST LEFT OUT OF THE LUNCHBOX



**X** Best left out



# TIPS FOR FUSSY EATING

- Lead by example, try to share the enjoyment of healthy food with your children.
- Expect rejection of new foods - this is normal for young children.
- Children may need to try a food up to 15 times before they accept it.
- Encourage children just to "taste". One bite will do. This is the start of learning to like new foods.
- Aim to keep trying.
- It's best not to give in with preferred foods because "they have to eat something".
- Praise efforts and try to ignore unwelcome behaviour.

**It's OK....  
remind yourself that one  
day your child is likely to  
eat a whole range of foods  
and enjoy them!**



## It's best that:

- **The adult decides what types of foods are offered, and when.**
- **The child decides which foods to eat, and how much to eat, from the choices provided.**

## Try not to:

- **Bribe children with the promise of a food reward**
- **Insist they eat everything on the plate**



# HEALTHY SNACK SWAPS THAT COST LESS

✓ Best Left In	✗ Best Left Out
<b>Apple</b> \$3.50/kg 	<b>Roll up</b> \$37.50/kg 
<b>Vegie sticks with hummus</b> \$2.40/kg 	<b>Corn chips</b> \$16.60/kg 
<b>Homemade banana bread</b> \$3.50/kg 	<b>Muesli bar</b> \$23.20/kg 
<b>Homemade cheese and biscuits</b> \$10.70/kg 	<b>Pre-packaged cheese spread and biscuits</b> \$46.60/kg 
<b>Yoghurt with fruit</b> \$4.10/kg 	<b>Sweet biscuits</b> \$11.80/kg 



## Take me shopping

Use these nutrition guidelines when choosing packaged foods (foods that may not be classified easily into one of the 5 food groups).

	Aim for	Best choice
Total fat	< 20g per 100g	< 10g per 100g
Saturated Fat	< 5g per 100g	< 3g per 100g
Carbohydrate - Sugar	< 15g per 100g	
Sodium	< 600mg per 100g	< 400mg per 100g
Fibre (if listed)	> 3g per serve is a high fibre food	





For more lunchbox ideas  
and recipes go to:

[www.goodforkids.nsw.gov.au](http://www.goodforkids.nsw.gov.au)

For information on  
lunchbox food safety visit:

[www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/consumers/  
life-events-and-food/kids/tips-for-lunch-boxes](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/consumers/life-events-and-food/kids/tips-for-lunch-boxes)

To order more of these brochures, call **1300 657 197**

**Nutrition Guidelines**

Cut me out and take me shopping

[www.goodforkids.nsw.gov.au](http://www.goodforkids.nsw.gov.au)



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