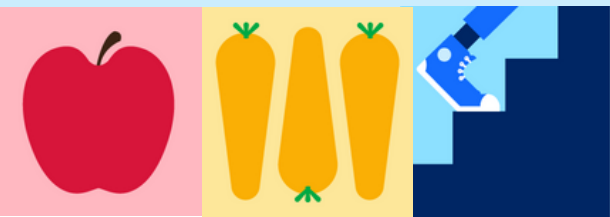




# Balancing the Lunchbox

Lunchbox ideas for  
children 1 to 6 years



'The heart of a child'  
by Worimi Artist,  
Lara Went

**Good for kids**  
Good for life



# The everyday lunchbox

## Everyday foods provide:



Energy to learn and play



Nutrients for growth and development



Support for the immune system



Dental health



The foundation of healthy habits



## Keep an eye out for extra tips:



food safety



saving money



saving time



ideas and info

# Everyday food for the lunchbox



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

# Examples of everyday foods



## Vegetables



Fresh or frozen cooked vegetables



Salad and raw fresh vegetables



Leftover roast vegetables



Canned corn kernels



Legumes (beans, chickpeas) and lentils



Vegetable based dip

Ask your child how they like vegetables in the lunchbox. They can be packed raw or cooked and cooled. Try adding a dip, such as hummus.



## Grain foods



Bread



Rolls



Wraps



Kulcha



Roti



Quinoa and brown rice



Couscous



Rice and corn cakes



Fruit bread



Wholemeal or wholegrain crispbread



Cereal



Oats



Noodles



Pasta



# Examples of everyday foods



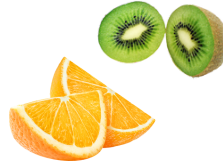
## Fruit



Fruit salad



Fresh fruit



Tinned fruit in juice



Dried fruit  
(small serves)



## Dairy



Cheese



Plain or fruit yoghurt



Plain milk



## Lean meat, fish, poultry, tofu and legumes



Reduced salt  
baked beans



Tuna or salmon  
in spring water



Leftover mince dish



Roast meats



Chicken or turkey



Legumes (beans,  
chickpeas) and lentils



Kofta or  
rissoles



Tofu and tempeh



Falafel



Eggs (if allowed)\*

\*Check your service's policy on packing eggs

# Everyday drinks for the lunchbox

## Plain water



Plain water is recommended as your child's main drink.

Pack a bottle of plain water everyday.



From 1 year of age children no longer need to drink from a bottle and can begin to use a cup.



## Plain milk

Plain milk can be a great source of dairy in the lunchbox.

Under 2 years: Pack full fat milk  
Over 2 years: Can drink reduced fat milk



Talk to your childcare about how they can support you to continue to breastfeed or provide breastmilk while your child is in care.



## Using plant based milk?

Look for those fortified with calcium.  
Aim for at least 100 mg of calcium per 100 ml.

# Everyday lunchbox ideas



- Roast chicken and avocado sandwich on multigrain bread
- Red capsicum slices
- Rice crackers
- Strawberries and blueberries
- Milk

💡 Not sure what foods to choose at the supermarket? This SWAP It guide may help with [reading food labels](#)



Make ahead freezer-friendly lunchbox foods to grab and go.

- Corn cakes with cheese and spread
- Boiled egg\*
- Cucumber sticks and corn kernels
- Tinned fruit in juice
- Pikelets



\*Check your service's policy on packing eggs



Tinned fruit in juice and canned or frozen vegetables are nutritious options.

# Everyday lunchbox ideas



- ☐ Tuna avocado, and avocado cucumber sushi
- ☐ Snow peas
- ☐ Plain mini rice cakes
- ☐ Apple slices
- ☐ Soy milk fortified with calcium



Prepare extra vegetables at dinner the night before.



Buy fruit and vegetables in season.



Pack dinner leftovers ready to go in the lunchbox.

- ☐ Ham and tomato with melted cheese wholemeal English muffin pizza
- ☐ Carrot and cucumber sticks
- ☐ Banana
- ☐ Rice crackers



# Everyday lunchbox ideas



- ☐ Zucchini slice\*
- ☐ Cherry tomatoes and carrot sticks
- ☐ Yoghurt and muesli
- ☐ Grapes and raspberries

\*Check your service's policy on packing eggs

- ☐ Tuna in springwater
- ☐ Leftover pasta
- ☐ Grated cheese
- ☐ Steamed carrot and broccoli
- ☐ Watermelon
- ☐ Fruit bread



Make scones, pikelets, and fruit or vegetable muffins at home.



Be aware of choking hazards for younger children. Cut foods like cherry tomatoes and grapes. Cook hard foods like carrot so they are softer.



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



# Everyday lunchbox ideas



- Brown rice, bean and vegetable salad
- Pear
- Cheese and rice crackers



Buy large blocks of cheese and large yoghurt tubs to pack in portion your child needs.



Pack cold foods in a lunch bag with an ice brick.



Rice and corn cakes, and wholemeal crispbreads are easy lunchbox items to have in the pantry.

- Falafel wrap with avocado and lettuce
- Orange wedges
- Fruit yoghurt
- Capsicum slices
- Plain mini rice cakes



# Lunchbox food swap ideas



Fruit juice and fruit drinks

Flavoured water, sports drinks, soft drink and cordial



Flavoured milk

Swap it to



Plain milk



Plain water



Confectionary and lollies



Jelly



Icing, frosting and sprinkles



Chocolate and chocolate spread



Swap it to



Vanilla custard

Dried fruit



Tinned fruit in juice



Yoghurt and muesli



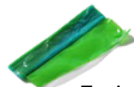
Cereal



Cakes



Donuts and waffles



Fruit roll ups



Sweet biscuits and cookies

Pastries



Swap it to



Fruit bread and fruit loaf



Pikelets



Savoury muffins



Scones

# Lunchbox food swap ideas



Corn chips



Potato chips



Flavoured crackers



Cracker and cheese spread packs

## Swap it to



Plain wholemeal crackers with cheese or veg-based dip



Rice based snacks



Vegetable sticks and dip



Deep fried food



Packaged potato products



Shortcrust and puff pastry

## Swap it to



Bread based scrolls



Leftover roast vegetables



Frittata



Zucchini slice



Corn fritters

Processed meats such as devon, salami, cabanossi, bacon



Packaged, crumbed meats such as chicken nuggets, fish fingers



## Swap it to



Meatballs



Homemade chicken tenders



Lean chicken or turkey



Tuna or salmon in springwater

# Lunchbox tips



When children don't eat all the food in their lunchbox, we may worry they haven't eaten enough, or about wasted food.

Children are good at listening to their hunger and fullness cues.

It is normal for a child's appetite to vary, some days they may not eat as much as others.

Talk to your child's educator if you have concerns about how much your child is eating.



## Tips for reducing food waste



**Involve children** in preparing the lunchbox. Give them a reasonable **choice** such as "would you like grapes or a banana?"



Pack an ice brick to keep cold foods cold. Offer **leftover lunchbox foods** for afternoon tea (if still safe to eat).



Make sure your child can **open containers** or wrapping of the foods packed.



Try not to pack too many **different foods**, which can be overwhelming. It's best not to pack too many **new foods** on the same day.

# Exploring new foods



Being wary of new foods is normal.

Serve **new foods** with '**safe**' foods that your child has accepted eating most of the time.

Serve 'new' foods in **small amounts**.

It's ok - one day your child is likely to enjoy a whole range of foods.

Talk to your child's educators for support on introducing new lunchbox foods.



**Make exploring food fun.**

Try preparing food in different ways.





# Mealtime tips



## Adult's role:

**When** to eat

**What** food is offered

**Where** food is served

## Child's role:

**Which** food is eaten

**How** much to eat



## Tips for mealtimes



**No pressure to eat** and **no distractions** at meal times helps children listen to their hunger and fullness cues.



**Try not to bribe** children to eat or use food as a reward.



**Lead by example**, try to share the enjoyment of healthy food with your children.

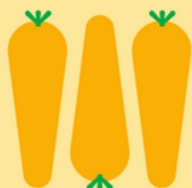


**Let children get involved** in preparing meals and serving their food.



**For more lunchbox ideas and recipes  
scan the QR code below or go to:**

[goodforkids.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-services/healthy-eating/family-resources](https://goodforkids.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-services/healthy-eating/family-resources)



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