

HEALTHY EARLY YEARS LONDON

Packed Lunch Guidance

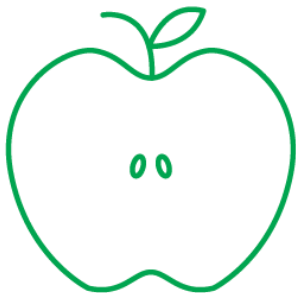
It is important to give children a healthy packed lunch

Packed lunches brought from home should provide children with healthy, balanced and nutritious food, which meets their needs to be physically active, to learn, grow well, and be healthy. The following information is based on the food and drink guidelines for early years:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/example-menus-for-early-years-settings-in-england

A healthier packed lunch contains a portion of one of the four main food groups:

- **One or two portions of starchy foods:** Provide variety across the week and at least one wholegrain starchy food each week. This includes bread, wrap, chapatti, bagels, pasta, rice, noodles, couscous or potatoes. This should form part of the main meal and can be part of the dessert
- **At least one portion of vegetables and/or one portion of fruit:** Provide a variety of different vegetables and fruit each week. This includes carrot, cucumber, celery stick, chopped tomato and fresh, tinned, frozen, dried fruit such as sliced apple, chopped grapes, raisins (but remember, dried fruit is not suitable as a snack). Aim for your child to have 5 different vegetables and fruit across the day
- **One portion of beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins:** Provide a variety of different foods each week. This includes kidney beans, chickpeas (hummus), lentils (dahl), tofu, quorn, egg, sliced meat or poultry in sandwiches
- **One portion of dairy or an unsweetened calcium enriched alternative:** This includes cheese in a sandwich, milk to drink, unsweetened yoghurt or fromage frais, rice or semolina pudding



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- **Aim to give your child variety.** Use different starchy foods, vegetables and fruit, and dishes made with beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other protein across the week. Variety will give your child all the vitamins and minerals they need
- **Include a dessert** such as fresh or tinned fruit, tea cake, fruit bread, unsweetened yoghurt, fromage frais, rice or semolina pudding (with fruit)
- **Drink, such as water and milk, will be available for your child during the day.** If providing a drink, only water, milk or unsweetened calcium enriched dairy alternative should be given
- Food provided for young children should be lower in salt (less than 1.5g / 100g) and sugar (less than 22.5g / 100g). Use the **Change4Life food scanner App** to find suitable foods
- Your child has a small stomach so make sure that **portion sizes are the right size for your child**
- Make sure that food provided is in **manageable pieces** and is not a choking hazard for your child
- **Do not include chocolate and sweets**, such as chocolate buttons, chocolate biscuit, cereal bar, processed dried fruit product
- **Do not include snack items** such as crisps, puffs, pulse or grain-based crisps, coated or flavoured dried vegetables
- **Don't use food marketed at children.** You pay extra for less healthy foods. Instead make your own lunch box items
- Ready-made meals are high in sugar, salt and fat. For a healthier and cheaper packed lunch, **cook from scratch**. Make a bigger quantity and use for a family meal and packed lunch, freezing some for another time

For packed lunch ideas: www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-early-years