



Packed lunches

Sphere Federation schools are happy and healthy places.

We encourage good eating habits for our children and provide guidance to support children making healthy choices.

This guidance is to guide you and your child about what choices can be made for healthy packed lunches.

A healthy lunch gives children the energy they need to learn and play for the rest of the day.

Fruit and vegetables

We encourage at least one item of fruit or vegetable in packed lunches to provide plenty of fibre, vitamins and minerals. This can be fresh, frozen, dried or tinned:

- a piece of fresh fruit or raw vegetable
- dried fruit including raisins, apricots and dates
- salad items such as tomato, cucumber, grated carrot, beetroot or lettuce – add them to a sandwich
- fruit smoothies
- finger foods such as cherry tomatoes, cucumber, peppers or celery are good with a dip such as hummus
- fruit salad / kebab
- vegetables added to
- salads, like sweetcorn or peppers

Starchy foods

Base each packed lunch on a starchy food as these foods are great for energy:

- try different types of bread including bagels, pitta breads, wraps, chapattis or bread rolls
- other starchy foods include pasta, rice, potato, noodles or couscous
- whole grain varieties are best for fibre



protein

Add some protein which is vital for healthy growth:

- oily fish such as sardines and mackerel
- fish such as tuna or salmon
- cheese such as Edam, cottage cheese or soft cheese
- dishes containing pulses or beans such as dhal, bean salad or hummus
- eggs including quiche or omelette
- lean meats such as chicken, turkey and ham
- meat alternatives such as tofu

And just a little...

...oils and spreads

Milk and dairy foods

Include items from this group which are crucial for healthy bones and teeth:

- choose from milk, yoghurt and yoghurt drinks, fromage frais and cheese

Packed lunches should not include fizzy drinks or sweets. Avoid fried foods – opt for baked instead.

Snack can be included but aim for healthier options. Try malt loaf, fruit-based bread/scone/cake/bar, plain popcorn (be careful: choking hazard for younger children), rice cake, seeds.

Drinks, particularly water, help your child to concentrate. We encourage water, milk or pure fruit juice rather than sweetened juice to be included in packed lunches.

Packed lunches... top tips

Practical tips for a healthy packed lunch...

Try an alternative to sandwiches – make rice, pasta, couscous or bean salads, or use rice cakes, crackers or bagels.

Keep food fresh by adding a small frozen ice pack.

Swap to wholegrain bread, or use one slice of white and one of brown.

Using a different type of bread each day can make lunchboxes more interesting.

One child's portion of fruit or vegetables is roughly the same amount as they could hold in their hand.

Swap squash and sweetened drinks to diluted pure fruit juice, water (provided at school) or milk.

Involve your child in choosing and preparing their packed lunch.

Use leftovers such as pasta dishes or vegetable pizza as part of your child's packed lunch the following day.

Use up leftover vegetables by making a soup and bringing it in a flask.

Always try to add some salad to sandwiches.

Vary fillings for sandwiches – try Quorn slices, hummus, egg, tuna or salmon, cottage cheese, grated cheese, cream cheese or sliced banana.

Some of our pupils need special diets so pupils shouldn't swap food at lunchtime.

Uneaten items and waste are taken home in your child's packed lunch box.

Especially for younger children, avoid choking hazards (eg whole grapes, popcorn).

For more information, advice and ideas, check out...

We love the [NHS Healthier Families website](#) – it's got food facts, activity ideas and guidance around children's weight. Make sure you check out the great [lunchbox ideas and recipes](#), too.

Sticking with the NHS, their [Live Well site](#) is geared up for adults, with support for a whole range of healthy living topics, including eating a balanced diet, healthy weight, exercise, quitting smoking and drinking less alcohol. The [Eat Well section](#) is worth checking out, especially to know more about the [5 A Day message](#).

More [recipes for packed lunches and other meals](#) can be found on the [Food A Fact for Life site](#).

[Netmums](#) also has [packed lunch box ideas](#), and you can find even more at [BBC Good Food](#).

Finally, this guidance on packed lunches is based closely on the Eatwell Guide – read more about [the Eatwell Guide](#) on the government's own site.



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