

Making lunch boxes can be a bit of chore, especially if your child brings home uneaten food! Encourage them by letting them help prepare and pack their dinner the night before, talk to them about what needs to go in and why certain foods are kept as treats and not included every day.

Talk about '5 a day'.

Be prepared! Starting school is an exciting time for a child. To ensure this is a positive experience parents and carers can help their child by making sure they are prepared for this next stage of growing independence.

E.g. Are they able to.....

Open their lunch box?

Take the lid off a yogurt?

Undo the packaging around prepacked foods?

Peel the fruit if needed?

Use a knife and fork in the correct hands etc?



If little fingers haven't yet mastered these skills then start now and encourage them to do these things for themselves, they will love 'being responsible' and starting school will hold less anxiety if they feel able to do these simple tasks for themselves.

Although rest assured if they are struggling there will be staff to help them along the way. Older children and siblings often love to help a young child, but ultimately they need to learn these skills for themselves and learning them in the familiarity of their own home for the first time is less stressful than waiting until they are at school.

And finally.... Keep it Cool! - consider investing in a small insulated box/bag, to make sure that in the hotter weather food is kept at a safe cool temperature, in particular , take care with foods such as ham, pasta and rice!

Healthy Lunch Box Advice

Dear Parents and Carers,

Starting school is full of new experiences, some children may be familiar with eating lunch as part of their preschool experience, but for some eating lunch at school will be another new learning experience. This leaflet is designed to help parents/carers and children think about the options that are available to them when considering lunchtime.

Cooked Lunches

Healthy Cooked lunches are available to all children, please ask at school for the current cost, a sample menu and also if you think your child may qualify for free school meals.

Packed Lunches

Some parents/carers will prefer to send a packed lunch to school with their child, rather than eating cooked lunches.

This leaflet is designed to assist parents and carers with creating fun and healthy lunch boxes for growing children.

A healthy lunch box should help to improve your child's attention, behaviour and learning throughout the day and into the afternoon. It should provide one third of your child's daily requirements of nutrients.

It should contain:



A source of protein to keep children alert, this may be sandwiches with fillings such as chicken, egg, ham, tuna or cheese.

Complex carbohydrates for slow release energy and help to keep up energy levels. This is found in food such as, wholemeal bread, pasta, banana or rice.



White bread, cakes and biscuits provide refined carbohydrates which only provide instant short lived energy. For variety, instead of bread every day pasta or rice salads or tortilla wraps make a nice change.



Calcium for growth, healthy bones and teeth. Children under 5 years shouldn't have a low fat diet, so choose whole-milk products such as Greek yoghurt. Make sure you regularly include, foods such as, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais, yoghurt drinks and smoothies.

Water or drinks cartons of fruit juice are very convenient (and can be frozen to provide a ice pack to help keep chilled food cold), however remember, like dried fruit, they are high in sugar and should be restricted to meal times. Consider diluting fruit juices with water for a healthier option.



Fruit and vegetables for vitamins and minerals.



Whole fruit may not appeal to young children, so try cutting up fruit into chunks and wrapping in clingfilm to keep fresh. Include dried fruit for an occasional treat (but not too much as it's higher in sugar)—dried apricots in particular are rich in vitamins and minerals.

Foods to avoid:

Many foods are marketed as 'healthy' and 'ideal for lunchboxes', but many are neither, here are some things to watch out for:

Cereal Bars: often have high sugar and fat content, sugar sticking to teeth may cause tooth decay.

Beware of drink cartons called 'fruit juice drinks' many are only juice flavoured sugary water (can be as little as 6% juice), they may also contain artificial flavourings, sweeteners and colouring

Savoury Snacks: are often highly processed and as such contain high levels of salt and saturated fats. Keep these to a minimum! Eg one cheese string contains 0.75g salt, which is 1/4 daily allowance for a 4 year old child (3g) - which is twice as much as in a standard packet of crisps!

'Real Fruit' snacks: saying a product is made of real fruit gives it a healthy spin, but check the packaging, some can contain as much as a whopping 63% sugar! The dentist would not agree this is a healthy option.

Flavoured yogurts: the once healthy yogurt, when served with a pot of confectionary to stir in, can contain as many as 5 teaspoons of sugar! Choose yogurts carefully and keep the less healthy options for the occasional treat rather than the norm.