

School Food Matters

Packed Lunch Portion Guide



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Starchy Foods

In a packed lunch, there should be:

- One or more portions from this group every day
- Three or more different starchy foods each week
- One or more wholegrain varieties of starchy food each week

Starchy Foods

The following foods are great options of starchy foods to include in your child's packed lunch:

- grains
- pasta
- oats
- cous cous
- bread
- cereals
- rice
- potatoes

Portion sizes

You should follow these portion sizes for your child's packed lunch:

- Pasta and noodles: 55g
- Wedges: 80g
- Rice: 45g
- Potatoes: 150g
- Bread: 1 or 2 slices
- Bagel: 1 small bagel or half a big bagel
- Rolls: 1 small roll
- Pitta, wrap or chappati: 1 small
- Starchy root vegetables (e.g. yam, plantain or cassava): 125g, or half a plantain, a few slices of yam or half a small cassava

Wholemeal

Wholemeal carbs are not only more nutritious than white varieties but they are similar in price.

Children are generally lacking fibre in their diets and wholemeal releases the energy slower and keeps us full for longer.

ALWAYS go for wholemeal!

Some great wholemeal options include:

- wholemeal bread
- wholemeal pitta or wraps
- wholemeal chappati or naans
- wholemeal pasta
- wholemeal couscous/rice
- wholemeal noodles
- oats
- bulgur wheat
- potatoes (keep the skin on for fibre!)

Fruits and vegetables

In a packed lunch, there should be:

- One or more portions of vegetables or salad every day
- One or more portions of fruit every day
- desserts that contain at least 50% fruit
- As much variety of fruit and veg as you can - aim for at least 3 different fruits and 3 different vegetables each week

Fruits

Fruits are packed with fibre and nutrients that help children thrive, and you can buy them fresh, dried, frozen or tinned, making them more versatile, convenient and affordable

- grapes
- berries
- peach
- lychees
- kiwi
- pear
- apple
- banana
- plums
- pineapple

Portion sizes

- Vegetables: 50g
- Fresh fruit: 50-100g
- Dried fruit: 1tbsp

Vegetables

The following vegetables are great options to include in your child's packed lunch:

- peppers (red, orange, yellow, green)
- broccoli
- mushrooms
- tomatoes
- cucumber
- sweetcorn
- carrots
- peas
- lettuce

Top tips

Tinned fruit (no added salt or sugar) and veg are a cheap and nutritious option!

Provide at least two different coloured vegetables and fruits each day.

Buy fruit and vegetables that are in season, it's cost effective and good for the environment.

Protein



In a packed lunch, there should be:

- a portion of food from this group every day
- oily fish once or more every three weeks (salmon, sardines, mackerel etc.)
- for vegetarians, a portion of non-dairy protein on three or more days each week
- processed meat (e.g. sausage, ham, pepperami) no more than once each week in primary schools and twice each week in secondary schools.

Sources of protein

Here are some protein sources you can include in a packed lunch:

- meat
- fish
- eggs
- tofu
- beans (black, kidney, pinto, fava, adzuki, and soy beans)
- other legumes (chickpeas, edamame beans, peas)
- tempeh
- lentils
- seeds

Portion sizes

You should observe the following portion sizes as a guide to including protein in a packed lunch:

- oily fish: 55-80g
- cooked beans, legumes, pulses: 2tbsp
- eggs: 1 egg
- plant-based alternatives (quorn, soya protein): 5-70g

Meat products

Meat products are processed meats and should only occasionally be included in a packed lunch:

- Sausages: 1 sausage
- Meat pastries or pies: 80g

Milk and dairy

Dairy foods are a rich source of energy, protein, calcium, vitamin A and riboflavin.

In a packed lunch, there should be:

- a portion of food from this group every day
- try including lower-sugar options

Dairy products and alternatives

Fruits are packed with fibre and nutrients that help children thrive, and you can buy them fresh, dried, frozen or tinned.

- dairy milk
- cheese
- yoghurt
- soft cheese
- soya milk
- oat milk
- rice milk

Portion sizes

The following portion sizes can guide how much dairy you include in a packed lunch:

- milk: 150-200ml
- cheese: 20-30g
- yoghurt: 80-120g

Top tip

Hard cheeses such as cheddar tend to be higher in saturated fat than softer cheeses. When using hard cheeses, choose stronger tasting varieties and use smaller amounts

Yoghurt

Opt for unsweetened natural, Greek or Skyr yoghurt to reduce sugar and add berries and a teaspoon of honey for sweetness