

Tips for a nutritious packed lunch

This guide complies with School Food Standards and offers tips on how to build a packed lunch on a budget, as well as suggestions for how to make lunches more inspiring.



One portion of wholegrains and one source of protein

- Three-bean pasta salad
- Jollof rice
- Rice and peas
- Roast chicken sandwich
- Cheese quesadilla
- Wholemeal pitta and hummus
- Chicken salad
- Pitta pizzas
- Tuna and pasta salad
- Vegetable noodles
- Soup and crackers
- DIY Tacos
- Falafel in a pitta
- Roast plantain wedges
- Salmon and cream-cheese bagel
- Tuna and bean salad
- Ham and cheese sandwich
- Chickpea and vegetable wrap
- Roast vegetable and turkey pasta
- Cucumber and hummus wraps

At least one portion of vegetables and one portion of fruit

- Bell pepper
- Carrots
- Celery
- Peas
- Corn
- Broccoli
- Cherry tomatoes
- Kale crisps
- Salad
- Spinach
- Courgette
- Green beans
- Beetroot
- Radish
- Cucumber
- Cauliflower
- Grapes
- Banana
- Orange
- Pineapple
- Cherries
- Mango
- Raspberries
- Strawberries
- Blackberries
- Dried fruit
- Tinned fruit (not in syrup)

One snack

- Small bag of popcorn
- Small pieces of cheese
- Crackers
- Low-sugar yoghurts (check the food label is green)
- Malt loaf
- DIY fruit crunch pots
- Brown, plain rice cakes
- Dried fruits (sultanas, raisins)
- Edamame beans

Tips to make a balanced packed lunch

- Pick a main course that includes wholegrain and protein, a selection of fruit and vegetables, one snack and water.
- Ensure fruit and vegetables are always included in a packed lunch.
- Choose wholegrain (bread, pasta, rice). Increased fibre will keep children or young people fuller for longer.
- Swap out sugary fruit juices, smoothies and fizzy drinks for water, or add fresh fruit to water such as strawberry, oranges or lemons.
- Replace crisps, cheese strings, cookies and sweets with healthier snacks.

Tips to create a healthy packed lunch on a budget

- Keep different types of wholegrain bread products in the freezer so you have a variety of options that will last longer – bagels, pittas, sliced loaf, wraps.
- Use leftover veg or roast meat from the day before to make cold pasta salads or sandwiches.
- Buy tinned fruit in juice (not syrup) and frozen or tinned vegetables - they are just as nutritious!
- Buy a steel water bottle rather than using disposable plastic water bottles - it's better for the environment and saves money in the long run.

Tips to help your child or young person enjoy packed lunches:

- Involve your child or young person with making their lunch - cutting the fruit and veg or adding salad to their wrap (do it the day before and squeeze some lemon on the fruit to keep it fresh).
- Dipping foods are fun and a happy change from a sandwich every day. Provide a low-fat dip such as hummus or tzatziki so they can dunk their carrots or peppers.
- Taste the rainbow! Try a variety of different fruits and vegetables for a visually fun packed lunch.