

# How to make a healthy lunch box



## Nurse Paula asks what should we include?

1. **Fruit**-Include at least one serve of fruit in your lunch box each day. Use fresh seasonal fruit whenever possible. Canned fruit in natural juice (with no added sugar) is also a good alternative. Dried fruit is high in sugar and can stick to teeth, resulting in dental health problems. It is best to include dried fruit only occasionally.
2. **Vegetables**-Remember to include vegetables in your lunch box every day. Encourage children to enjoy the crunch and colour of raw vegetables. Try salad or grilled vegetables such as capsicum or eggplant in your rolls or sandwiches. Try vegetable sticks with dips, or a container of mixed raw vegetables.
3. **Dairy – milk, yoghurt, cheese and alternatives, mostly reduced fat**-Children need dairy foods like milk, yoghurt and cheese for optimal growth and development. It is important to put some dairy options in children’s lunch boxes every day. If your child cannot tolerate dairy foods, use suitable alternatives like calcium-fortified soy or rice drinks, or soy yoghurt. One serve of dairy food is 250 ml of milk, 200 g of yoghurt (one small tub) or 40 g of cheese (two slices).
4. **Protein – meat or meat alternatives**-Each day, the lunchbox should include a food that is high in protein, such as some lean meat or poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, legumes/beans, or nuts and seeds. If your school has a nut-free policy, peanut butter and other nuts should not be included in your child’s lunchbox.
5. **Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and high-fibre varieties**-Remember to include lots of varieties of bread, fillings and spreads. Other grain-based meals can also be excellent choices for school lunches, such as rice or pasta salads.
6. **Lunch box drinks**-Water is the best drink for children and should be packed with the school lunch box every day. A drink bottle filled with water that children can refill throughout the day is an excellent way to keep kids hydrated. On a warm day, frozen water bottles can help keep lunches chilled and also provide a refreshing drink.  
Plain milk is another great drink option for school lunches, and reduced-fat options are suitable for school-aged children. UHT milk is a handy, practical choice, because it does not need to be kept cold.  
Sugar-sweetened drinks are not suitable for children’s lunch boxes and these should be avoided.