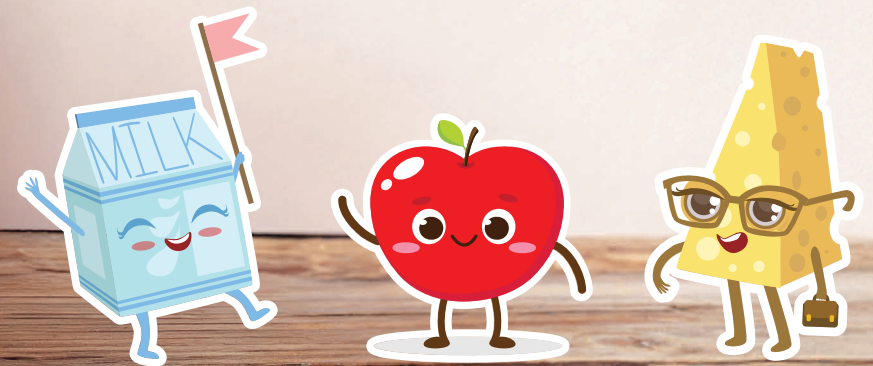


Diabetes Research &  
Wellness Foundation

Top Tips

# for a Healthy Packed Lunch

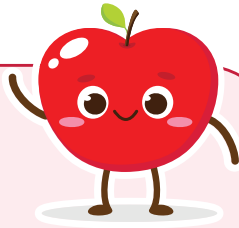
By: Sarah Woodman  
Diabetes Specialist Dietitian





# Understanding food groups

## Fruits and vegetables



- Fruits and vegetables contain lots of vitamins (especially vitamins A and C) and minerals.
- Vitamin A is important for the heart and lungs to work properly, support the immune system and helps you to be able to see in the dark. Vitamin C is important to maintain healthy skin, blood vessels and is vital for healing grazes and cuts.
- Fruits and vegetables also contain lots of water and fibre, which are good for digestion.
- We should all aim to eat at least five portions each day of fruits and vegetables. A portion is what you can hold in your hand, e.g. a piece of fruit, slice of large fruit, e.g. melon, about three/ four strawberries.

## Proteins

- Foods containing protein help bodies to grow and repair itself.
- There are many sources of protein, including meats, fish, eggs, milk, cheese, yoghurt, beans and pulses, nuts and vegetarian/vegan alternatives.
- Protein foods often also contain iron or calcium, which are important.
- Iron is needed to make red blood cells, which carry oxygen around the body. It also plays an important role in brain development, in fighting infections and for growth.



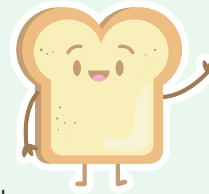
## Calcium

- Foods containing calcium such as milk, yoghurt, cheese and other dairy foods are vital for building strong bones and teeth. Cheese can help protect teeth from sugars and acids in other foods and, due to containing fat and protein, keep tummies feeling full.
- Children should aim to drink at least 350ml (12oz) of milk a day, or eat two servings of foods made from milk, such as cheese, yoghurt or fromage frais.
- From October to March, all children should take a daily 10 microgram vitamin D supplement to help them absorb the calcium from the foods they are eating.
- Other rich sources are green leafy vegetables, nuts\*, fish where you eat the bones, such as sardines and pilchards.



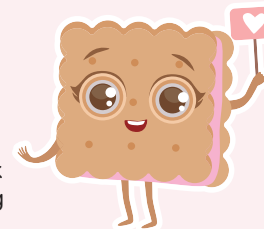
## Carbohydrates

- Carbohydrates are important for energy – to be able to run around at playtime but also to be able to concentrate. These foods also contain B vitamins, calcium, iron and fibre, which can help children feel full up after lunch.
- It is best to have a mixture of protein foods, fruits and vegetables alongside eating carbohydrates.



## Sweet treats

- Fatty and sugary foods can be included as part of a healthy lunchbox provided they are in small quantities. Eating too many throughout the day/week risks tooth decay and becoming overweight.



"I am absolutely delighted to be supporting DRWF with the healthy-eating initiative in schools. We all need to understand the impact of different foods and nutrients on our bodies. Helping children and their families or households to learn more about food promotes healthy habits to last a lifetime and supports children to grow, develop, be energetic and prevent future health problems associated with poor food or lifestyle choices."

**Sarah Woodman**  
Diabetes Specialist Dietitian



**For more inspiration,**  
visit the following websites:

**NHS Lunch recipes**  
[www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/lunch/](http://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/lunch/)

**BBC Kids packed lunch ideas**  
[www.bbc.co.uk/food/collections/kids\\_packed\\_lunch\\_ideas](http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/collections/kids_packed_lunch_ideas)

# Our top tips

## Making healthy choices about what to eat and drink is important to:

- grow properly
- make it easier to concentrate in class
- improve behaviour
- help be a healthy weight and prevent developing illnesses or long-term health conditions in later life
- be energetic!

## A healthy diet at school can provide:

- more energy for playtime
- fuel for sport
- tooth decay prevention

A healthy diet includes a mixture of different foods. Make sure all food groups are offered to provide a good balance to support their bodies and minds and help keep to a healthy weight.

Encourage your children to get involved in preparing and choosing what goes in their lunchbox. They are more likely to eat it if they helped make it.

## Don't forget a drink to stay hydrated!

We suggest a refillable bottle of water or sugar-free squash. To help keep your child's lunch cool in hot weather you could freeze a bottle of water to use as an icepack. Children need to drink at least six to eight glasses of fluid each day to prevent dehydration. Even mild dehydration can have a negative effect on health and the ability to concentrate at school.



## Small extras

- malt loaf
- fruit loaf
- plain popcorn
- small chocolate bar
- flapjack bar
- mini hot cross bun
- mini Swiss rolls
- mini cake bars
- custard pot
- slice of homemade cake (one small serving only)
- small cereal/oaty bars
- jam tart
- wheat-based savoury snacks
- cheese-flavoured savoury biscuits
- small packet of crisps
- rice pudding



## Fruits and vegetables

### Fresh fruits and vegetables

- banana
- apple
- satsuma
- kiwi fruit
- melon
- carrot
- cucumber
- grapes
- raspberries
- blueberries
- olives
- strawberries
- cherry/plum tomatoes
- sugar snap peas (in pods)

Encourage your child to eat whole foods where possible rather than processed. For example, having a piece of fresh fruit is a lot healthier than a sticky strip of processed fruit snack roll.

### Dried fruit

- raisins
- a small portion (less than 30g) of apricots, figs, dates

Raisins and other dried fruit are sticky and a concentrated form of sugar, which can cause tooth decay. To minimise this risk, raisins are best eaten as part of a meal rather than as a snack on their own.

### Tinned fruit (in juice not syrup)

- mandarins
- pineapple
- peach slices



If you have a fussy eater, the top tips for that are continued exposure, consistency and role-modelling.

### \*Packed lunch policy:

To ensure you align with your child's school packed lunch policy, please always check with a member of staff before taking in higher risk items, such as nuts (e.g. due to allergies), hot liquids and sweet treats.

## Proteins

- hummus with breadsticks and carrot or cucumber sticks
- hardboiled egg
- chunks of cheese
- matchbox-sized piece of cheese/cheese string/miniature cheese
- crab sticks
- fromage frais
- falafel
- roasted chickpeas
- yoghurts (plain/low sugar)



Frozen yoghurt tubes can help keep your child's lunchbox cool and will be defrosted by lunchtime!

## Sandwich/wrap fillings (protein-rich)

- tuna
- cheese/cheese spread
- hummus
- ham, chicken, turkey or mock-meat slices
- egg
- peanut butter\*
- avocado
- smoked/tinned salmon

Vegetarian and vegan alternatives could include falafel, hummus or "mock meat" products.

You could add sweetcorn, grated carrot, cucumber, coleslaw to sandwiches or wraps.

## Carbohydrates

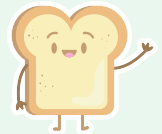
### Savoury

- bread, either as plain bread, bread and butter or as a sandwich (fun idea – use cutters to cut into different shapes and sizes)
- wholemeal and granary bread have the most fibre but you could try 50/50 or plain white, if your child does not like anything brown or seeded
- higher fibre options are better as they provide fibre and slower releasing energy

### Thermal flask/containers

- curry and rice
- pasta shapes and sauce
- soup
- baked beans
- dhal (also protein)
- sausage casserole with couscous
- mashed potato meals such as cottage pie

This is a great way of taking warm food and using up leftovers!



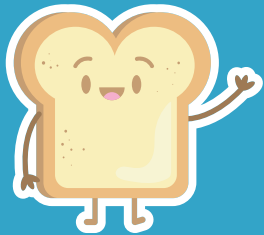
### Alternatives to bread and sandwiches

- bread rolls
- pitta bread with filling inside or cut into strips to dip into hummus
- crackers
- crispbread
- oatcakes
- rice cakes
- rice/pasta
- bagel
- breadsticks
- matzos
- tortilla wraps
- chapatti
- roti
- paratha
- flatbread wraps
- sandwich thins

Why not make a pasta or rice salad in a tub? Add vegetables such as kidney beans or sweetcorn and you could add some meat (ham, sausage, cold chicken) or fish (tuna, sardines) or cheese cubes/grated cheese.

### Food safety:

In hot weather, lunchboxes need to be kept cool during the morning. If they cannot be stored in the fridge, pop a small freezer block into the lunchbox.



The Diabetes Research & Wellness Foundation works towards educating, informing and reminding you of the best and healthiest choices to make.

If you would like to become part of our Diabetes Wellness community, visit our website for more details.

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All details correct at time of print

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