

# Tips to promote healthy eating – information for parents

The School nutrition and healthy eating policy and guidelines<sup>1</sup> have been developed to ensure all students have access to healthy foods and drinks and a consistent approach to the availability and sale of food and drinks in Northern Territory Government schools.

## Tips to help promote healthy eating

- encourage children to bring their own water bottle with them to school each day as water is the best drink. Children should not bring sweet drinks such as juice, cordial or soft drink to school as these drinks may replace other more nutritious foods. Sweet drinks increase the risk of dental caries and are high in kilojoules
- vary the fruit you buy each week for school lunches, try to buy fruits in season as they will often taste best
- vary the breads and sandwich fillings each week
- encourage children to bring along a bottle of milk if lunch is being stored in a fridge as dairy products are particularly important
- bring yoghurt as it can be frozen and used to keep the rest of the lunch box cool
- involve your child in selecting foods for their lunch box, giving them two options is plenty of choice to make them feel empowered
- encourage your child to be involved in food preparation, such as making some high fibre fruit muffins
- encourage your child to be involve in planting some tomatoes or lettuce to be included in their lunch.

## Lunch box checklist

### Lunch has a healthy wholesome main

- wholegrain or wholemeal sandwich, roll, bagel or wrap filled with:
  - protein source such as low or reduced fat cheese, tuna, chicken, eggs or beans
  - salads such as avocado, cucumber, carrot, tomato or lettuce
  - spreads such as peanut butter, avocado, hummus or cream cheese.

### Healthy main lunch ideas

- tuna with corn and grated vegetables with sauce such as salsa, chutney
- roast beef with salad
- chicken with coleslaw and low or reduced fat dressing

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<sup>1</sup> <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/health-safety/school-nutrition-and-healthy-eating>

- chicken with avocado and lettuce or alfalfa
- leftover roast veggies such as zucchini, pumpkin, capsicum or eggplant with ricotta or low or reduced fat cheese and pesto
- grated carrot and sultanas with grated low fat cheese and alfalfa
- low or reduced fat cheese with salad and hummus
- ricotta with banana and honey or ricotta with sultanas and grated carrot
- English muffin with tomato and low or reduced fat cheese
- pita bread with tuna, lettuce and mayonnaise
- turkey, cranberry and spinach in Turkish bread
- vegetable soup with bread
- leftover homemade muffin pizzas
- pasta and tuna salad with vegetables.

## Lunchbox contains some delicious dairy

Select at least one option:

- plain milk
- flavoured milk
- yoghurt
- frûche yoghurt
- creamed rice
- low or reduced fat cheese and biscuits
- low or reduced fat cheese stick
- drinking yoghurt.

## Lunchbox has two fruity foods

Select at least one fresh fruit option:

- fresh whole fruit, try to have different varieties
- snack packs of tinned fruit
- fruit salad
- frozen oranges and frozen banana.

## Other yummy ideas

- banana bread
- homemade fruit muffin
- popcorn
- mixed nuts and seeds
- half fruit scones

- fruit cake.

## Easy fruit and veggie lunchbox fillers

Some veggie and fruit friendly lunchbox ideas:

- corn on the cob or little tub of corn kernels
- chopped fruit salad
- cherry tomatoes or baby carrots
- cold jacket potato
- cut up veggies with a little tub of low or reduced fat cream cheese, low or reduced fat yoghurt dip or salsa
- mini muffins, scones or pikelets made with added fruit or vegies
- fruit kebabs for example chunks of fruit on paddle pop sticks
- mini tins or containers of fruit in natural juice.

## Put the 'snazz' back into the simple sandwich

The following ideas can help make sandwiches more exciting:

- use three slices of bread and two fillings to make triple deckers
- cut pita bread in half to make pockets and add filling
- use whole wheat sandwich size crackers instead of bread.

Or try one of the following filling ideas:

- chicken, avocado and lettuce
- apple and cream cheese
- egg and lettuce.

## Alternatives to chips and muesli bars

Snack size potato chip packets and muesli bars are convenient options for lunch boxes; however, they are not nutrient rich foods. Chips are high in fat and salt, while muesli bars are high in sugar. Instead try one of these suggested alternatives for healthier eating:

- rice cakes or crackers
- pretzels
- prawn crackers cooked in microwave
- mini toasts
- pappadums cooked in microwave
- pita chips
- bread sticks
- wholegrain crackers with low or reduced fat cheese
- unsalted popcorn
- dried fruit

- unsalted nuts and seeds
- small tins of corn
- small bag of breakfast cereals that meet nutrient criteria for example high fibre, low sugar varieties like fruity bites, fruity bix.

## Calcium for healthy bones and teeth

Calcium helps build strong bones and teeth, and the best sources of it are in milk, cheese and yoghurt. These foods are also sources of energy, protein and essential vitamins riboflavin and vitamin A. To meet calcium requirements, at least three serves of calcium a day is needed.

One serve, approximately 300 mg of calcium, is equal to:

- 250 ml full cream milk or calcium enriched soy milk
- 200 g tub yoghurt
- 200 ml custard
- 45 g cheese – 2 slices.

## Easy ways to increase calcium in your child's diet

Easy ways to increase calcium in your child's diet include:

- offer milk instead of cordial and fruit juice
- offer breakfast cereals with milk as a snack
- use custard, low or reduced fat yoghurt or fromage frais for a healthy dessert
- try cheese sticks in the lunch box
- offer homemade milkshakes and fruit smoothies, made with fresh fruit and milk or yoghurt, as they make a great snack
- use low or reduced fat milk as much as possible in cooking, including in soups, sauces, mornay and milk based puddings. This is also a healthier alternative to coconut milk which does not contain calcium
- use lots of grated cheese on pasta and pizza or sprinkle on vegetables
- try toasted cheese sandwiches for lunch.