

Packed lunch guide for parents

Making the healthy choice the easy choice



Healthy Schools

Haringey
LONDON

Packed lunches

We recommend you take a look at the 'change4life' website and their section on packed lunches. It includes **affordable recipe ideas, healthy swaps and tips.** Find them here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/change4life>



Children need to eat healthy and balanced meals to allow them to grow, develop and thrive. Healthy eating patterns also improve their concentration at school.

We would always encourage children to choose to have school meals rather than packed lunch, as the food served in schools has to meet the National School Food Standards. Research has shown that 99% of school meals meet these standards compared to just **1%** of packed lunches (2).

If you are preparing packed lunches for your child, ensuring the lunch is balanced and healthy can really help your child's health, as well as their readiness to learn at school.

Here is some guidance about what your child's packed lunch should contain...

1/2 of the packed lunch should be vegetables and fruit (with more vegetables than fruit).

1/4 of the lunch should be protein. For example:

- Meat and fish
- Egg
- *Nuts
- Pulses (beans/ lentils)
- Dairy (yoghurt/ cheese)
- Tofu/ quorn

*Many schools are nut free because of allergies. Always check your school policy before including nuts

Always have water or low-fat milk as a drink

1/4 of the lunch should be starchy foods (wholegrain wherever possible). For example:

- Rice
- Pasta
- Bread
- Potatoes

Bibliography

1. NHS. Change4Life [online]. [Cited 2020 January 26]. Accessible from: <https://www.nhs.uk/change4life>

2. Islington Council. The effectiveness of Islington's Free School Meals policy [online]. 2019 [cited 2020 January 26]. Available from:

<https://democracy.islington.gov.uk/documents/s17053/The%20effectiveness%20of%20Isingtons%20Free%20School%20Meals%20policy.pdf>

Packed lunch pick and mix

Pick something from each of these categories to make a healthy and balanced packed lunch. Examples of individual dishes are included.

Tip: if you have a small thermos, leftover home-cooked meals make nutritious packed lunches.

Fruit



1. Fresh fruit

- Apple, pear, banana
- Satsuma, orange segments
- Passionfruit or kiwi fruit half (with spoon)
- Chunks of melon, watermelon, mango, pineapple
- Grapes (chopped in half - under 5 years)
- Plums, apricots
- Nectarines, peaches
- Berries
- Cherries (chopped and stone removed - under 5 years)

2. Fruit salad/ fruit kebabs

3. **Dried fruit** (note: this has a higher sugar content than fresh fruit, so only give a ½ portion/ handful)

- Dried apricot, mango, apple, banana
- Prunes, raisins
- Raisins

4. **Tinned Fruit/ snack pack** (in natural juice, not syrup)

Note: A portion size of fruit and vegetables for children is a child's handful

Vegetables



1. Fresh vegetables

(can serve with hummus/ beetroot dip/ natural yoghurt)

- Corn cobs (cooked and cooled)
- Carrot sticks (raw)
- Cucumber sticks (raw)
- Green beans (cooked or raw)
- Celery sticks
- Cherry tomatoes

2. **Salads:** more vegetables than dressing, salads without mayonnaise

- Coleslaw, potato salad
- Bean salads
- Lettuce/ tomato/ avocado salad

3. **Soup** (in a small thermos)

- Pumpkin
- leek and potato
- minestrone



4. **Curry/ stir fry** (in a small thermos)

- Mixed pepper & mushroom stir fry
- Aubergine and spinach curry

Dairy

- Milk
- Cheese cubes/ sticks or slices
- Cream cheese
- Cottage cheese
- Yoghurt (natural/ low sugar where possible)



Protein



1. Meat/ fish

- Tinned tuna/ salmon
- Lean roast/ grilled meat
- Lean deli meat (ham/ beef/ chicken etc.)
- Skinless chicken drumsticks
- Prawns

2. Eggs

- Hard boiled eggs
- Frittata/ omelette (e.g. with vegetables)

3. Pulses

- Lentil curry
- Baked beans (preferably low sugar)
- Hummus dip

4. Tofu cubes/ Quorn pieces

5. Savoury muffins (with ham/ cheese)

6. Soup

Chicken and corn, pea and ham

7. Leftover casserole/ stew

Chili con carne, chicken stew

8. Nut butters (if allowed *)

Starchy foods

(Wholegrain wherever possible)



Mains

Wraps, sandwiches, rolls

Muffins/ bagels/ crumpets

Sushi

Homemade mini pizzas

Savoury muffins

Pasta dishes

Rice/ quinoa/ cous cous dishes

Noodle dishes

(can serve pasta/ rice etc. cold as a salad or warm in a small thermos)

Water



Take a water bottle to refill throughout the day.

Tip: If the weather is warm, consider freezing this overnight to act as an ice-block, keeping the lunch chilled.

Optional extras



1. Sweet baked items

Spinach and apple muffins, carrot and courgette muffins, fruit/ malt loaf

2. Snacks

- High fibre, low sugar cereal (muesli)
- Protein spreads (hummus, nut butter*, cream cheese) with crackers/ crispbreads/ rice cakes/ breadsticks

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