

Packed Lunch Guidance

Introduction

To grow and stay healthy children need to eat a nutritionally well balanced diet.

Schools are an influential setting and can contribute significantly to improving the health and well-being of pupils. Good nutrition in childhood can help to prevent a variety of health problems, both in the short term and later in life. There is increasing concern that many children are consuming too much fat, sugar and salt and too little fibre, fruit and vegetables.

Packed lunches can contribute to almost a third of a child's weekly food intake and therefore need to be balanced and nutritious.

Aim

To ensure that packed lunches (brought in from home) reflect the new standards for school meals.

Rationale

The content of lunchboxes needs to reflect the requirement of schools to meet minimum food and nutrition standards for school meals. The contents of lunchboxes in some schools can be extremely unhealthy, recent audits of lunchboxes have shown that in the main they contain foods with high levels of fat, sugar and salt, and very few fruit and vegetables.

The short term effects of unhealthy packed lunches and food intake can include poor growth, tooth decay, obesity, anaemia, constipation, poor concentration and behavioural problems which may have an impact on a child's learning. The longer term effects of a poor diet in childhood can be an increased risk of stroke, cancer, heart disease and diabetes in adulthood.

Children's packed lunches should include items from the 5 main food groups;

- 1) **Bread, Rice, Potatoes, Pasta.** These starchy foods are a healthy source of energy. Packed lunches should include 2 or more portions e.g. pasta salad, sandwich.
- 2) **Fruit and Vegetables.** These foods provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. Lunches should include at least 1 portion of fruit and 1 portion of vegetables / salad, or more e.g. carrot/cucumber sticks, cherry tomatoes, a piece of fruit.
- 3) **Milk and Dairy foods.** These foods provide calcium for healthy bones and teeth. Include 1 portion at lunch e.g. yoghurt, fromage frais, milk.
- 4) **Meat, Fish, Eggs, Beans.** These foods provide protein for growth. Packed lunches should include 1 portion of these foods e.g. boiled egg as filling in sandwich, mixed bean salad.
- 5) **Drinks** – You do not need to send a drink in as each child is given a drink of water. Any drinks provided in lunch boxes should only include either plain water, milk (semi-skimmed), unsweetened fresh fruit juice, diluted fresh fruit juice, fruit or dairy based smoothies.

Please support us by not including these items in a packed lunch

Foods and drinks high in fat and / or sugar

It is important not to fill up on too many foods that are high in fat and / or sugar at the expense of other more nutritious foods. Limiting high fat and sugar foods will help protect young people from becoming overweight as well as helping prevent tooth decay, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

- Fizzy Pop
- Sweets
- Chocolate confectionery bars

Please also remember that we cannot have any items containing nuts in school due to children in school that have severe allergies.

A choice of only **one** of the following is suggested per day:

- A cake bar
- Packet of crisps
- Biscuit

Sending in too much

We have found that some children are overwhelmed when presented with a large amount of food. It is recommended that a portion size for a child is the same size as the palm of their hand.

Please remember that the children are only in the hall for approximately 30 minutes and they want to play with their friends in their lunch break rather than being in the hall for the whole hour.

Waste and Disposal

The school will, within reason, send any uneaten packed lunch food items back home. The rationale for this is that parents can also monitor what their child has consumed during the day and then raise any concerns over their child's food intake with the school.

