

# HEALTHY LUNCHBOXES

## SIMPLE SUMMER LUNCHBOX FILLERS

*Stuck for summer snack ideas for kids' lunchboxes?*

### Why not try some of these suggestions?

- Vegetable or bread sticks (e.g. carrot, celery, beans) with different flavoured reduced fat dips like Skinny Tzatziki or extra light cream cheese.
- Air popped popcorn
- Rice cakes with cottage cheese.
- Rice crackers or Pita chips with mild salsa dip.
- Fresh fruit – try fruit whole, cut into wedges or as fruit kebabs on paddle pop sticks, chilled or frozen.
- Homemade fruit muffins or raisin/fruit toast.
- Scones with cheese and vegies (courgette or carrot), or sultanas/dried fruit.
- Snack-sized tub of reduced fat yoghurt (plain or fruit flavoured).
- Hard-boiled egg.
- Cubes, slices, shapes or wedges of reduced fat cheese with wholemeal crackers.



## SUPER SANDWICHES!

### Bread:

- Wholemeal/multigrain/rolls/pita/lavash/rye
- English muffins.

OR

### Plain cracker biscuits:

A variety

### Fillings:

- Salad: tomato/grated carrot/lettuce/cheese/ /cucumber/courgette/bean or alfalfa sprouts
- Meat/fish/chicken/egg
- Baked beans/spaghetti
- Potato salad
- Cheese – grated/sliced/cubed
- Cottage cheese with corn relish
- Carrot and sultanas
- Tuna and mayonnaise
- *Your own, or your child's creation!*



## PUT THE 'SNAZZ' BACK INTO THE SIMPLE SANDWICH!!

The following ideas may help to make sandwiches a little more EXCITING!

### TRY:

- Triple Deckers – make a sandwich with 3 slices of bread and 2 layers of filling. Remove the crusts and cut into 3 strips.
- Pita Pockets – half a pocket of Pita bread filled with filling.
- Use cookie cutters pressed into your sandwiches to make some fun sandwich shapes. *Imagine how much fun your child would have eating an animal-shaped sandwich!*
- Whole wheat sandwich size crackers (eg. Sandwich-size crackers) with your child's favourite toppings.
- Vary meats – include lean ham, chicken, turkey, tuna or salmon (in springwater).
- Add reduced fat cheeses.
- Use a variety of vegies – like grated carrots, courgette, lettuce, cucumber and sliced tomatoes (*pat dry to prevent sandwiches from going soggy and put them between dry fillings*).



### Here are a few tasty sandwich filling options:

- Grated carrot, lettuce and sultanas with reduced fat cheese.
- Tuna, diced celery and cucumber.
- Chicken and chopped celery.
- Egg and lettuce.
- Apple and cream cheese.
- Reduced fat cheese and tomato or Marmite.
- Chicken, avocado and lettuce.
- Ham, crushed pineapple and grated reduced fat cheese with salsa or tomato paste.
- Try different spreads like chutney, poly or monounsaturated mayonnaise, avocado, tomato paste, or cream cheese.

***Sandwiches are cheap, easy to make, they're convenient and can be a lot more adventurous than the common ham and cheese on white bread! They're a great way to include lots of fruits and vegies***

## STUCK FOR EASY FRUIT AND VEGIE LUNCHBOX FILLERS?

Here are some vegie and fruit-friendly lunchbox ideas:

- Corn on the cob or little tub of corn kernels
- Cold jacket potato.
- Cut up vegies with a little tub of cream cheese, salsa or reduced fat yoghurt dips.
- Mini muffins or scones
- made with added fruit or vegies.
- Fruit kebabs (chunks of fruit on paddle-pop sticks)
- Fruit crumbles.
- Mini tins or containers of fruit in natural juice.
- Chopped fruit salad.



## LUSCIOUS LUNCHES

When kids are tired of sandwiches, what about a meal in a plastic container? Include a fork or spoon for eating.

### Ideas:

- Cold meats/chicken/ tuna/ham/boiled egg
- Lettuce/tomato wedges/sprouts/carrot sticks/olives/cheese cubes/snow peas/raw beans/frozen peas and corn
- Leftover stir-fry or fried rice
- Spaghetti bolognaise
- Fruit salad
- Coleslaw
- Potato/rice/pasta salad



# PARTY IDEAS

## TASTY TREATS FOR PARTIES

### Why not try:

- Pretzels
- Pita chips
- Mild salsa and other low fat dips with rice crackers & vegie sticks
- Mini vegie burgers or burgers with salad
- Diet jelly cups with or without fruit
- Fruit platters filled with yummy seasonal fruit
- Watermelon chunks or strawberries
- Small fruit chunks in an icecream cone topped with a dollop of low fat vanilla yoghurt
- Frozen or fresh "traffic lights" (thread cubes of kiwi fruit, pineapple or banana and watermelon on a paddlepop stick – you may need to brush with orange juice to prevent discolouring. Put some waxed paper between each layer if freezing overnight).
- *Banana Blizzard:* (thread 3 pieces of banana onto a paddlepop stick, dip in yoghurt, wrap in Gladwrap and freeze overnight)
- *Watermelon Shots:* (puree seedless watermelon flesh in a blender until smooth. Pour into small 30ml plastic shot cups and freeze until firm. Serve with a spoon. Alternatively, try pureeing hulled strawberries and low fat vanilla yoghurt instead of watermelon)
- Fruit Smoothies (kids could help to make their own)

Reference: Victorian government, [Frozen fruit snacks](#), 2006, [www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au](http://www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au)



### Have a "Make Your Own Pizza Party"!

Kids have GREAT fun making their own healthy pizzas on Pita bread bases or English muffins. *\*But make sure to keep kids away from the hot oven!*

## BONZA BBQ IDEAS

Lean hamburgers on bread rolls, served with:

- coleslaw, lettuce or beetroot
- onions and tomato
- pepper & parsley
- BBQ capsicum and onion slices



### Vegie burgers:

- homemade patties containing vegetables &/ or lentils/ beans
- serve with onion rings, tomato and chopped lettuce

### Kebabs:

- pre-skewered lean meat, or chicken
- add assorted vegetables eg mushrooms, onion, pepper, courgette, or any vegetable on 'special'
- add chopped pineapple for sweetness



### BBQ corn cobs

 (grilled on the BBQ)

### Jacket potatoes

 (topped with favourite fillings)

### Vegie and meat lasagna

### Mini pizzas

 (on pita bread or English muffins)

### Vegetable fried rice

 (include a heap of fresh vegies)

## EATING IN THE OUTDOORS!

*Is the weather fine?*

*Feel like doing something a little different for dinner?*

*Why not have a family outing and shift some meal times to the great outdoors?*

A family picnic or BBQ is a great opportunity to eat in a more relaxed environment and, while you're in the backyard or the park, get in some physical activity as a family!



### Here's some tasty picnic snack food ideas:

- Pita Chips - you can make your own by cutting pita bread into wedges, laying flat on a tray and baking in a 150°C oven for approximately 10 minutes (or until golden brown and crispy) or buy them in a packet – serve with low fat dip or salsa.
- Rice cakes with low fat cream cheese spread on top
- Rice or wholegrain crackers on their own, with low fat dip or with slices of reduced fat cheese.
- Vegie sticks and low fat dip or salsa.
- Plain, fruit, or cheese and grated vegie scones with a smear of margarine or light cream cheese, or fruit spread/jam.
- Air popped popcorn (for children over 4 years of age)
- Dried fruit washed down with water (so it doesn't stick in the teeth!).
- Tubs of reduced fat yoghurt (freeze the night before for a cooler taste).
- Fruit kebabs (chunks of fruit on a paddlepop stick)

EATING IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS!

## TASTY HAMBURGERS RECIPE

15 minutes preparation + 10 minutes cooking.

Serves 6

### Ingredients

- 350 g lean minced beef
- 1 large grated carrot
- 2 medium courgette, grated
- 1 teaspoon mixed dried herbs
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- 1 beaten egg
- 1 green apple, large, cored and grated
- 3 slices wholemeal bread, made into crumbs
- 1 tablespoon olive oil



### To assemble

- 1 large sliced onion
- 2 tablespoons grainy mustard
- 6 small lettuce leaves
- 6 hamburger buns
- 2 sliced tomatoes
- 6 slices canned beetroot

### Method

Combine beef, carrot, courgette, apple, breadcrumbs, parsley, herbs and egg. Form into 6 patties (*Note: these can be made ahead of time*). BBQ the patties using moderate heat, for about 5 to 6 minutes on each side. While burgers are cooking, cook the onion on the BBQ hotplate. Split and toast buns. Spread top half of each with mustard. Assemble burgers by placing a lettuce leaf on one half of each hamburger bun, adding a burger patty, onions, sliced tomatoes and beetroot. Top with remaining half of bun.

Recipe sourced from [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

# DRINK IDEAS

## MY CHILD WON'T DRINK WATER!

It's important to encourage kids to drink water, but if this is tricky, here are some tips:

- Have water on the table at meal and snack times
- Keep cold water in a jug in the fridge and add slices of lemon or orange to give the water a better taste
- In summer, try freezing small pieces of chopped fruit in ice blocks and add these to water
- Drop some ice cubes into their cup of water on warm days, this keeps it cold and adds some novelty
- Try a water filter, filter jug or special filter tap if your child doesn't like the taste or your local tap water
- Take filled water bottles when you go out

Water is the #1 choice for a thirst quenching drink.

*It's also VERY family-friendly!*

- It's FREE
- If it spills it doesn't stain kids' clothes and it's easy to clean up!
- Its sugar and fat free!



## DRINKS AND EXERCISE

Drinking enough water is very important for kids when playing sport or training. Water:

- prevents muscle cramps
- replaces fluids lost when sweating
- helps to control their body temperature
- prevents constipation as they increase the amount of fibre they eat.

It's important to drink about half a glass of water every 10–20 minutes, several hours before exercise, and try to have water regularly during exercise. Remind kids not to rely on thirst to make them drink — by that time they're already dehydrated!



**SO, ENCOURAGE KIDS TO DRINK HEAPS OF WATER!**

Reference:  
Nutrition Project Team, *A Youth Worker's Guide to Nutrition: Everything you never wanted to know about food and young people*, West Moreton Regional Health Authority, 1994.

## Cool (and Hot) Drinks for Kids

- Water – it's the best!
- Low fat milk – for healthy bones and teeth!
- Low fat milkshakes – nutritious!
- Fruit Smoothies – fruit and low fat milk!
- 100% fruit juices with no added sugar or self-squeezed orange juice – dilute it with water and drink only once a day (at the most)
- Self squeezed orange juice – yum!
- Warm low fat milk with Milo – mmmmm!



Reference: Queensland Health, *What is better food?*, 2002 adapted from Pademelon Press, *There's more to food than eating*, Food foundations for children birth to eight years, 1999

## FACTS ABOUT SWEET DRINKS

- Sweet drinks include all soft drinks, sports drinks, cordials, fruit drinks, fruit juice drinks and flavoured milks, either bought or home-made.
- Sweet drinks aren't really necessary in a healthy diet for kids.
- While 100% fruit juice does provide some valuable nutrients, it also contains lots of sugar – natural sugars that are **very concentrated** that aren't good for kids' teeth.

Sweet drinks:

- are high in energy (kilojoules)
- are high in sugar
- contain few vitamins or minerals
- can fill stomachs up, making kids less hungry for more nutritious foods

- Encourage kids to eat fresh fruit instead of drinking juice. If your children aren't big fruit eaters though, it's okay for kids to have 1 small glass (200ml) of unsweetened (no added sugar) fruit juice a day, preferably watered down.



# VEGETABLE IDEAS

## HELP! MY CHILD WON'T EAT VEGIES!

Vegetables are full of nutrients and fibre. An easy rule to remember is the more colourful the veggie, the better it is for your child!

An important first step if you want your child to eat their vegies is to make sure they see YOU enjoying your vegies on a regular basis at home. Children are quick to pick up if you don't like something or are avoiding eating some-thing, and may often imitate your eating habits!



Tips to help get more vegies and goodness into kids:

- Offer vegies in a positive, casual way and believe your child will enjoy them. They may not of course, but it's best to start out by thinking positively!
- Children's food preferences can change very quickly. Keep offering small amounts of disliked vegies, as the more familiar it is, it may lead to them accepting it. Serve bigger quantities of their favourite vegies
- Cook vegies just until tender or crisp by steaming, microwaving or stir-frying them. Don't overcook them so they're soggy. Over-cooking can make vegies' taste, texture and smell unpleasant, and makes them lose their goodness.
- Raw vegies like pepper strips, peas in the pod, cucumber, bean sprouts and tomato wedges are often the most popular with kids as they make great finger foods.
- Mini muffins with grated vegies are a yummy way of getting some vegies into kids!

Reference: Tasmanian Family Day Care, [Fun Food: Help! My child hates vegetables](#), 2003.

### Flying Vegie Pizza Recipe

10-12 minutes preparation + 15-20 minutes cooking  
Serves 4

#### Ingredients

1 small onion	½ small green pepper
2 mushrooms	1 tomato
1 small courgette	1 large pita bread
Dried oregano & black pepper	
1-2 tablespoons reduced salt tomato paste	
100g grated reduced fat cheese	

#### Method

Pre-heat oven to 200°C. Wash onion, pepper, mushrooms, tomato and zucchini and pat dry with paper towels.  
Slice the onion into rings, slice the capsicum into strips. Cut the mushrooms into thin slices. Cut the tomato into slices. Cut the courgette into rounds.  
Spread the pita bread into tomato paste, place on a baking tray and cover evenly with the vegetables. Sprinkle with the cheese, oregano and black pepper.  
Bake in oven until vegetables are cooked and the cheese is golden brown (15-20 minutes).

Recipe sourced from Heart Foundation resource [Eat Smart, Play Smart – A Manual for Out of School Hours Care](#), 2004.

## KIDS AND VEGIES: THE TRICKS OF THE TRADE!

- Offer vegies in different forms – raw, cooked, canned, dried and frozen, and encourage children to try them.
- Focus on serving lots of *different* vegies, not big amounts of the same 1 or 2 vegies.
- Involve children in choosing, preparing and serving vegies. This helps to make them more interested in the food they're eating and it's a good way to teach them about different varieties.
- Help your child to grow a few of their own vegies. Often children are more likely to want to eat vegies they've grown themselves.
- Present vegies in ways that make it easy for kids to eat them – e.g cut vegies into sticks, grate raw vegies onto plates so they can eat them as finger food, or cut vegies into shapes.

**Remember,**  
keep offering  
children  
vegies..  
Young children

may need to

- Dipping vegies is a lot of fun, so have some chopped vegies and a bowl of dip on the table between meals so they can 'pick at' them when they feel like it.
- Stuff vegies like celery sticks with cream cheese, egg or tuna.
- Always praise your child for trying new vegies
- Mix grated or diced vegies in with their favourite foods! E.g add peas, grated pumpkin or carrot to burger patties, add grated carrot and courgette to mince and pasta sauces, use vegies as pizza toppings or puree them for soups and dips.



Reference: Tasmanian Family Day Care, [Fun Food: Help! My child hates vegetables](#), 2003.

## COOKING UP SOME FUN!

Are the kids looking for something different to do? Why not help them cook up some fun in the kitchen! At the pre-school age, you can talk to your child about which foods are healthy and why. It's also a good age to introduce recipes that involve 'building', such as layering toppings on a pizza base or spooning yoghurt, cereal and fruit into a glass to make a tasty and healthy dessert.

#### Try making some of the following:

- Muffins with sultanas, chopped apples, mashed banana, cooked pumpkin or grated carrot
- Fruit and yoghurt Smoothies
- Mashed potatoes – let them wield the masher, and jazz the spuds up with yoghurt and herbs or another vegie like grated carrot or courgette
- Preschool children can also help set the table, serve food and clean up.



Reference: The Raising Children Network, [Cooking with Kids](#), viewed Feb 2007 [www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au).

## VEGIE GARDENING WITH KIDS

Ever thought of starting a vegie patch?

Children can learn new skills, have fun, play and develop self-confidence by spending time in the garden tending plants and growing their own food. Most children enjoy being outdoors and love digging in the soil, getting dirty, creating things and watching plants grow. Many children are more likely to eat vegies they've grown themselves!



Try these suggestions to get children involved and interested in creating an edible garden:

- Keep it simple.
- Give children their own garden space. It doesn't have to be big - it can start in a large container or in a few pots.
- Use lightweight, easy to handle and correct size tools & garden equipment.
- Encourage children to dig in the dirt. Younger children love making mud pies.
- Grow interesting plants like sunflowers, corn, pumpkins, tomatoes and strawberries.
- Use a trellis or tepee to grow beans.
- Plant flowers that attract butterflies, ladybirds & other interesting insects or birds.

**Remember, you don't have to be an expert gardener to do gardening activities with your children. Local nurseries, or big hardware stores like Bunnings™ (they sometimes hold gardening sessions for kids) are good places to go for advice.**

Why not try some of the following garden activities with your child?

- Planting vegies, fruit and flowers in the correct season
- Hand watering their garden with a watering can.
- Gathering seeds and dried flowers for craft activities.
- Picking vegies and fruits when they're ready to eat.

Reference: [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) Gardening for Children, viewed Feb 2007.

## SUPER SUMMER SALADS

Summer is the ideal time to take advantage of the delicious fruit and vegies that are in season. Salads are a great way to eat lots of different varieties. The added bonuses are they're cheap, easy to prepare and take to school, and taste great!

*To increase variety, try adding fresh mango or pineapple, or include a Pita or tortilla wrap or wholegrain roll in the lunchbox to tip the salad into.*



Some tasty salad suggestions:

- In a Tupperware™ container, pack a piece of chicken, some tinned tuna in springwater or hard boiled egg with shredded lettuce, diced cucumber, avocado, pepper, cubes of reduced fat tasty or Feta cheese and cherry tomatoes.
- Combine diced carrot, avocado, pepper, tomato, celery and cucumber. Toss with a dressing of olive oil, lemon juice and black pepper.

## INVOLVING CHILDREN IN FOOD PROVISION

Tips on how to involve kids in meals:

- Involve kids in choosing which fruit and vegies they would like to eat by either taking them food shopping, or helping you to plan your shopping list. Often, if kids feel like they have a choice in what they eat, they are more likely to eat it.
- Get your kids to help with food preparation. Use this opportunity to explore new foods – colours and shapes, smell and feel.
- Grow some vegies or herbs in the garden or pot and let kids look after them by watering and nurturing plants.

Check out this great 'Bean Submarine' recipe for kids in the kitchen!

### Bean Submarine Recipe

5 minutes preparation + 10 minutes cooking. Serves 2

- |                                       |                            |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2 tablespoons cooked red kidney beans | 2 tablespoons corn kernels |
| ½ spring onion, sliced                | ¼ carrot, grated           |
| 50g reduced fat tasty cheese          | 2 tsp mild taco sauce      |
| 2 wholemeal or wholegrain bread rolls |                            |

Mix the kidney beans, corn, spring onion, carrot, cheese and taco sauce in a bowl. Split rolls along one side and pull out some of the bread from the middle of each roll. Spoon bean mixture evenly into each roll. Wrap roll tightly with foil and bake at 180°C for 10 minutes.

Recipe sourced from Go For Your Life website – [www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au](http://www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au).

### Carrot Mini Muffins Recipe

Makes 24

- |  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| 150g self-raising flour                | 2 eggs          |
| 150g mixed fruit muesli                | ½ tsp cinnamon  |
| 100g brown sugar                       | 150ml olive oil |
| 180g grated carrots (2 medium carrots) |                 |

Preheat oven to 180°C. Lightly oil a 24-hole mini muffin tin. In a large bowl combine flour, muesli, grated carrot, sugar and cinnamon and mix to combine. Lightly whisk eggs and add to oil. Pour into carrot mixture and mix until just combined (don't over mix). Spoon evenly into the muffin tin and bake in pre-heated oven for 12-15 minutes or until a skewer inserted comes out clean. Allow to rest in the tin for 5 minutes before turning out and cooling on a wire rack.

Recipe sourced from the Raising Children Network website - [www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au).

### POTATO SALAD RECIPE

10 minutes preparation + 12 minutes cooking.  
Serves 6

#### Ingredients

- |                                      |                    |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 8 small potatoes                     | 3 spring onions    |
| 1 stalk celery                       | 1 small red pepper |
| 2 tablespoons chopped parsley        |                    |
| 1 teaspoon French mustard            |                    |
| 2 tablespoons reduced fat mayonnaise |                    |

#### Method

Wash vegetables. Place potatoes in saucepan and add 3 cups of water. Cover and cook on medium heat for 12 minutes. Strain.  
Chop spring onions, parsley and celery. Remove seeds from pepper and slice.  
Add mustard and mayonnaise to chopped vegetables. Slice potatoes and mix gently with vegetable mixture.  
*Note: Potato salad is a picnic favourite! Make it ahead of time and take it along in an insulated container like an Esky to keep it cool and safe to eat.*

Recipe sourced from [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

# HEALTH IDEAS

## HINTS FOR HAPPIER MEALTIMES

Family meal times are a great opportunity to spend time together, enjoy food as a family and help children learn about healthy eating.

**Family food doesn't have to be a feud... it can be fun!**

Here are some hints for relaxed and happier mealtimes:

- Encourage talking and sharing. Ask your child about their day
- Make an effort to set the table and ask your child to help. This helps to make dinner a 'special' time of the day.
- Avoid distractions - switch off the TV or radio.
- Encourage children to help with food shopping, planning meals, food preparation and cooking.
- Let your child decide when they're full – don't argue about food
- Set a good example. Eat with your child and show them that you eat your veggies and other foods that are good for you too!



**Remember, the earlier you start establishing healthy eating habits, the happier and easier mealtimes will be!**

- Adults' reactions to what and how much their children eat can have a big impact on their food preferences. Children won't eat if they're unhappy and if they know that each mealtime is going to be a battle.
- Avoid using food as a reward at the same time as praising, for example, "You've been very good today so you can have dessert". This can increase the preference for that particular food.
- Instead of using sweet or high fat foods as a reward for good behaviour, try alternatives like stamps or stickers – kids love those!

## LOOKING AFTER TEETH

Your child's teeth are important for their appearance, eating and talking.

Children's teeth should be cleaned as soon as the first tooth comes through by wiping with a clean facewisher or cloth. A small soft toothbrush can be used any time. Children need an adult to help with toothbrushing until about the age of 9 or 10 years. Children should not swallow large amounts of toothpaste.



Children who often eat sugary foods are at risk of tooth decay. Sugar is found in many children's foods, drinks and medicines, including syrup medication, teething rusks and vitamin syrups. Try to limit these foods to "sometimes", not everyday.

Reference: Queensland Health, [What is better food?](#), 2002 adapted

## KIDS' TEETH AND SNACKS

Try to:

- ◆ Limit foods containing lots of sugar, eg. sweet drinks and biscuits to parties and occasional meal times
- ◆ Avoid giving kids sweet snacks between meals
- ◆ Give kids snacks such as bread (all types), savoury spreads, plain cracker biscuits, cheese, veggie sticks, fruit, yoghurt and corn on the cob.

## A FEW TIPS FOR READING FOOD LABELS

Nutrition label can be tricky to understand.

The easiest and quickest way to make healthier food choices, is to check the 100g column on the label of food products.

What to look for on the nutrition label in the 100g column:

On the nutrition label, information about the food product is presented per Serving Size and per 100g. Use the figures in the "per 100g" column to make comparisons between similar food products.

NUTRITION INFORMATION		
	Serving size 35g	
	Quantity per serving	Quantity per 100g
Energy	700 kJ	2000 kJ
Protein	4.2 g	11.8 g
Fat	- total	22.3 g
	- saturated	10.3 g
Carbohydrate	- total	19.4 g
	- sugars	0.9 g
Dietary Fibre	1.3 g	3.6 g
Sodium	228 mg	650 mg

**Ingredients:** wheat flour, vegetable oil, tomato powder, cheese, milk solids, salt, herbs and spices, sugar, yeast, vegetable extract (corn, soy), raising extract (E341), flavouring, food acid (E30), natural colour (E100, E160c), may contain traces of nut, egg or seeds.



The healthiest choices will be those foods that are:

- Less than 10g of Total Fat per 100g, and
- Less than 10g of Sugars per 100g
- Less than 400mg of Sodium (salt) per 100g

\*The main exceptions to the above are:

Dairy products like milk and yoghurt, which should have less than 2g of Total Fat per 100g.

For products with added fruit e.g breakfast cereals with fruit, look for products with less than 20g sugar per 100g.

\*If you are looking for breakfast cereals, also look at the "Fibre" content. Ideally look for cereals with 3g or more of fibre per 100g.

## VITAMINS AND MINERALS

Vitamins and minerals are necessary for good health. If children are seriously lacking in one or more of these in their diet they may not grow and develop to their full potential.



Some children don't get enough calcium (for healthy bones and teeth) during the day. Children should have at least 3 small serves of milk, yoghurt or cheese during the day.

If children don't eat one small serve of meat (red meat, chicken, turkey or fish) or meat alternatives like eggs or legumes (lentils, chick peas, kidney beans) during the day they may not be getting enough iron.

If children eat a wide variety of foods and don't have too much fatty, salty or sugary foods and drinks they will get all the nutrients they need. Vitamin and nutrient supplements shouldn't be necessary (unless advised by a doctor) and can lead to health problems if taken in large or incorrect amounts.

Reference: Queensland Health, [What is better food?](#), 2002 adapted from Pademelon Press, There's more to food than eating, Food

## TV FOOD ADVERTISING AND KIDS

A high proportion of TV ads in kids TV viewing times are for sweets, snack food products and sweet drinks.

**If you're concerned, here are some simple things you can do to combat the problem:**

- Spend some time watching commercial children's television and monitor the food advertisements that are being shown whilst your children are viewing.
- Discuss the power of advertising with your children and talk about the ways in which advertisers try to increase their desire to purchase.
- Play "spot the gimmick" and talk about the jingles, animations, catchy music and other attention-grabbing techniques used in advertisements.
- Discuss the issues with friends, family, or people you work with. Encourage others to become advocates for junk food free children's television.
- Limit your child's TV watching time. Aim for less than 2 hours per day.



Reference: [www.parentsjury.org.au](http://www.parentsjury.org.au) viewed Feb 2007

## IRON AND KIDS

Iron is a mineral that is essential for the formation of red blood cells, which transport oxygen around the body. Iron found in animal food is easily absorbed. Iron in plant foods is not as well absorbed.

Significant sources of iron include red meats, fish, chicken, shellfish, eggs, legumes and dried fruits. Other sources of iron are green leafy vegetables, wholemeal bread and breakfast cereals. Foods rich in vitamin C, eg. fruit, increase the absorption of iron from cereals, vegetables and legumes, so it's good to drink 100% orange juice with these foods.



It is important that meat is included in kids' diets a couple of times a week. Vegetarian diets (diets that don't contain meat), need to be carefully planned to make sure that children receive enough iron. Further information can be obtained from a dietitian at your local community health service.

Reference: Queensland Health, *What is better food?*, 2002 adapted from Pademelon Press, *There's more to food than eating*, Food foundations for children birth to eight years, 1999

## TIPS FOR LOW-FAT COOKING

*Healthy cooking isn't difficult. Your favourite recipes can be modified so they offer a healthier alternative.*

**Here are some suggestions for low fat cooking:**

- If you need to use oil, try to use only a little bit by using cooking oil spray, and look on the label for mono- or polyunsaturated oils like olive, soy or canola oil to use.
- Cook in liquids (eg. stock, wine, lemon juice, vinegar or water) instead of oil.
- Try using low fat yoghurt, low fat soy milk, evaporated skim milk or cornstarch as a thickener instead of cream.
- When browning vegetables, put them in a hot pan then spray with oil rather than first adding the oil to the pan. This reduces the amount of oil that vegetables (such as mushrooms) can absorb during cooking.
- An alternative to browning veggies by pan-frying is to first cook them in the microwave, then crisp them under the grill for a minute or two.
- When serving meat and fish use pesto, salsas, chutneys and vinegars in place of sour creams, butter and creamy sauces.
- Choose lean meat cuts and skinless chicken breasts (*If unsure, look for the Heart Foundation tick of approval on the label*).
- Choose low fat dairy products and low fat processed foods (where possible) to cook with.
- Choose canned fish like tuna in spring water as a change to cooking with meat.
- Add plenty of vegies to any sauces you make and avoid adding high salt/fat ingredients like salami, bacon, butter or cream.

References:  
[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Healthy\\_cooking\\_tips?open](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Healthy_cooking_tips?open)  
Wilkenfeld R. & Sutherland R., 2002. Younger Hunger youth workers manual, Central Sydney Area Health Service  
Healthy Cooking Tips, [www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au](http://www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au)

## FOOD SAFETY

*Research has found that the most common causes of food*

*poisoning are:*

- Foods prepared too far in advance
- Food stored at room temperatures
- Cooling food too slowly before refrigeration
- Not re-heating food to a high enough temperature
- Using contaminated cooked food
- Under-cooking meat and meat products
- Not thawing frozen meat and poultry in the fridge or microwave

## FIVE RULES OF FOOD SAFETY

Bacteria are found in varying numbers on foods, in the air and on us. Given the right conditions, these bacteria can multiply and make us sick. However, with safe handling and food preparation practices, growth of bacteria can be minimised or even prevented.

Food safety for high-risk groups such as babies and toddlers is essential. Young children and babies haven't yet fully developed the ability to deal with high numbers of bacteria.

*Following a number of simple rules prevents most food poisoning:*

1. Keep hands and nails clean
2. Keep kitchen surfaces and equipment clean and free of pests
3. Handle food safely
4. Cook high-risk food thoroughly (minced and processed meat, chicken and seafood).
5. Keep hot food hot and cold food cold.



Adapted from *Food Safety Matters* Queensland Health 2000

# SNACK IDEAS

## CAN YOU \$AVE MONEY ON HEALTHY SNACKS?

YES! Here are some money saving tips when food shopping:

- Write a list and plan your weekly menu before you shop. This way you'll only buy what you need so there's less chance of wasting food at the end of the week.
- Check for weekly specials and use these in your weekly menu.
- Don't shop when you're hungry! This can tempt you to buy sweet or fatty treats you don't need!
- Don't be afraid to buy the cheaper 'no name' brands in the supermarket, as you can save money and often their quality is just as good.
- Buy bread on special and freeze to use later.
- Buy fruit and vegies in season – they'll be fresher & cheaper.
- Compare the prices of frozen/canned fruit and vegetables. It may work out cheaper to buy large tins or frozen packs.

**Buying healthy food won't break the bank. There are lots of different ways to save money and you'll be surprised that it's cheaper than you think!**



### Cost Savers for cooking:

- Packed lunches save a lot of money!
- Check to see what's in your pantry and leftovers in the fridge – use these items up early on in the week to avoid wasting them.
- Use leftover vegies to make vegetable soups.
- Dried peas, beans and lentils are cheap, low in fat and high in fibre. They can be used to bulk up a meat meal – try adding cooked, mashed lentils to rissoles to make cheap, healthy hamburgers or savoury mince for spaghetti bolognaise.
- Stew ripe fruit and freeze. Over-ripe bananas can be mashed and frozen for later use in mini muffins and Smoothies.

## SNACKS WITH CHRISTMAS CHEER

With so many parties and get-togethers over Christmas, New Year and the summer holidays there are plenty of opportunities for the littlies to eat more of their "sometimes" foods and drinks everyday!



**If you're looking for some healthier snack options that are easy for kids to eat on the run, here are some tips:**

- Have fruit washed, sliced and ready to eat.
- Freeze grapes for a refreshing, cool summer treat.
- Festive Fruit!** Pre-cut fruit is great for younger kids – have it prepared on the table or make up small kebabs. Small tubs of fruit canned in natural juice are also a great option. Try putting out small bowls or platters of chopped fruit in Christmassy colours (i.e red and green)
- Offer vegetable sticks with reduced fat dips.
- Keep some reduced fat natural or fruit yoghurt in the fridge.
- Top dry biscuits with tomato, avocado or reduced fat cheese.

Encourage kids to drink water as often as possible and drink sweet drinks like fruit juices, juice drinks, cordials, soft drinks and flavoured milk only occasionally as treats.

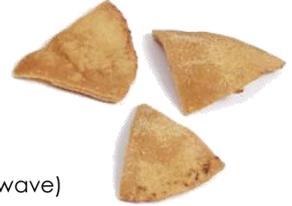
Reference: [www.mothereinc.com.au](http://www.mothereinc.com.au), viewed Feb 2007

## 10 ALTERNATIVES TO CHIPS & CRISPS

The convenience of snack-size potato crisp packets makes them seem like a perfect option for the lunchbox. However, they are really high in fat and salt and low in other nutrients. Potato chips and crisps, corn chips and similar snack foods are best left as occasional treats.

### Try these alternatives instead:

- Rice cakes or crackers
- Prawn crackers (cooked in the microwave)
- Pretzels
- Mini-toasts
- Pappadums (cooked in the microwave)
- Bread sticks
- Pita chips (Buy them in packets, or Make your own: cut pita bread into small triangles, spray with oil, season with some mixed herbs or parmesan cheese and cook in moderate oven until lightly browned and crispy)
- Wholegrain crackers with cheese
- Nibble pack with dried fruit and air-popped popcorn
- Breakfast cereals e.g. Shredded wheat, Weetabix Minis, cornflakes.



**\*Some of these also come in snack-size packs, so check out your supermarket shelves.**

Reference: Community Nutrition Unit, The great Aussie lunchbox dilemma, 2004

## SNACK IDEAS

### Breads and cereals:

- Corn thins (or rice cakes) with peanut butter, honey or Marmite
- Crumpets
- Scones
- Weetabix with cream cheese
- Raisin bread/toast
- Sandwiches on different types of bread
- Jaffles, toasted sandwiches
- Plain cracker biscuits with cheese and Marmite

### Fruit:

- Small pieces/slices of fruit
- Frozen fruit pieces (orange segments, sliced seedless grapes, & watermelon)
- Banana slices coated in coconut
- Dried fruit
- Tinned/stewed fruit



### Vegetable:

- Vegetable pieces (carrot, celery, broccoli, cauliflower) with dip eg cream cheese and corn relish
- Celery sticks filled with peanut butter or cottage cheese

### Low fat dairy foods:

- Cheese/ cheese sticks/ cheese shapes
- Milk/flavoured milk
- Milk shakes
- Yoghurt
- Dairy desserts

Reference: Queensland Health, What is better food?, 2002 adapted from Pademelon Press, There's more to food than eating, Food foundations for children birth to eight years, 1999

# HEALTHY BREAKFAST IDEAS

## BRILLIANT BREKKIE IDEAS

Eating breakfast is important for kids as it fuels their bodies and brains for their daily activities. Brekkie gives kids bodies the nutrients they need to grow and develop, and the energy to play, concentrate and learn.

### STUCK FOR BREKKIE IDEAS?

Well, don't worry! Breakfast can include almost any type of food – breads, cereals, vegies, fruit, reduced fat dairy products and lean meats.



### Try these brilliant brekkie ideas!

- Cereal and reduced fat milk with a piece of fruit.
- Toast with toppings such as jam or fruit spreads, baked beans, spaghetti, reduced fat cheese and tomato, Marmite and reduced fat cheese, scrambled egg or banana. Try using a variety of breads like English muffins, crumpets, bread rolls and different grainy breads like multigrain or wholemeal.
- Pikelets or small pancakes with berries or other sliced fruit on top
- Fresh/tinned fruit salad with reduced fat yoghurt (plain or fruit flavoured).

*For kids who don't have much of an appetite in the morning, a Fruit Smoothie is a yummy alternative that will help to fill them up!*

## TIPS FOR GETTING KIDS TO EAT BREAKFAST

Try offering a variety of different foods to see what your child likes.

Some ideas could be:

- Pancakes or crumpets
- Toasted sandwiches
- Grilled cheese on toast cut into 'fingers'
- Tinned or fresh fruit salad in natural juice with reduced fat yoghurt (plain or fruit flavoured)
- Weetabix drizzled with a bit of honey.



For something really different, try offering a 'drinkable' breakfast, like:

- Fruit smoothie (fruit, low fat yoghurt and juice blended together)
- Egg flip (low fat milk, fruit juice and an egg mixed together)

**Give your child some choice** – when you're doing the shopping, ask them to make a choice of what they want for breakfast between a few different options, so they feel like they're more independent.

**Involve your child** in helping to plan and prepare their breakfast. They could set the table, pour their milk or juice, or shake their cereal into their bowl.

**Set a good example.** Sit down and eat breakfast with your child. Kids are great imitators!

Reference: Tasmanian Family Day Care, [Fun Food: Breakfast](#), 2003.

## SUPER FRUIT SHAKES AND SMOOTHIES!

*Fruit shakes and smoothies have become very popular – they taste great, they're quick and easy to make and they're good for you! These delicious and healthy recipes are great at any time of day, especially for a filling breakfast or snack on the run!*

### FRUIT MELODY RECIPE (Serves 1)

- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1/3 cup apricot nectar or juice
- 1/2 ripe banana, mashed
- 1 passionfruit
- 1 teaspoon honey

**Blend well, serve with crushed ice and enjoy!**

### BANANA SMOOTHIE RECIPE (Serves 1)

- 1 cup low fat milk
- 1/3 cup low fat yoghurt
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1 ripe banana
- 1 raw egg

**Blend together, serve immediately and enjoy!**

### STRAWBERRY SURPRISE RECIPE (Serves 4)

- 200g low fat frozen strawberry yoghurt
- 250g strawberries
- 1 litre (4 cups) low fat milk



**Soften yoghurt, hull and cut strawberries into pieces and blend until smooth.**

*Recipes sourced from Nutrition Australia healthy eating school newsletter inserts, 2006*

### Fruit Smoothie Recipe

- 1 cup reduced fat milk
- 1/4 cup low fat vanilla yoghurt
- 1 cup drained canned peaches in natural juice
- 1 ripe banana
- 2 teaspoons honey
- Pinch cinnamon

Blend ingredients until smooth, pour and your kids will enjoy!

*Recipe sourced from Nutrition Australia website – [www.nutritionaustralia.org](http://www.nutritionaustralia.org)*