

# Healthy Lunchbox Recipes



# Lunch box ideas

Below are a few healthy lunch box ideas to inspire you year-round. We always recommend thinking of each lunch box in terms of the five food groups and making sure they're all represented:

- **Dairy:** the foods in this group are excellent sources of calcium, which is important for strong, healthy bones. Not many other foods in our diet contain as much calcium as dairy foods.
- **Fruit:** fruit provides vitamins, minerals, dietary fibre and many phytonutrients (nutrients naturally present in plants), that help your body stay healthy.
- **Grain (cereal) foods:** always choose whole grain and/or high fibre varieties of breads, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, etc. Refined grain products (such as cakes or biscuits) can be high in added sugar, fat and sodium.
- **Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds:** our body uses the protein we eat to make specialised chemicals such as haemoglobin and adrenalin. Protein also builds, maintains, and repairs the tissues in our body. Muscles and organs (such as your heart) are made of protein.
- **Vegetables, legumes and beans:** vegetables should make up a large part of your daily food intake and should be encouraged at every meal (including snack times). They provide vitamins, minerals, dietary fibre and phytonutrients (nutrients naturally present in plants) to help your body stay healthy.



Double decker sandwich with a brown layer of bread in the middle



Mini wraps



Sushi bread sandwiches - made by flattening the bread and rolling it up or using wraps



Pikelets and boiled eggs



Corn fritters with turkey slices.



Pasta salad

# Tasty Snacks



**Bean dip with veggie sticks** 5 of 5-a-day, low fat. Whizz 215g can drained butterbeans, squeeze lemon juice, 1 small crushed garlic clove, 1 tbsp each chopped parsley and mint, 2 tsp olive oil and 1 tbsp water. Serve with vegetable dippers made from 1 celery stick, 1 carrot and ½ red pepper - wrap in a damp piece of kitchen paper to stop them drying out (serves 1).

**Raspberry banana smoothie** Whizz 85g raspberries together with 1 chopped banana and 150ml orange juice until smooth (serves 1).

**Cinnamon custard plums** Put 1 tbsp honey, 1 tsp butter, 2 quartered plums, few drops vanilla extract, pinch ground cinnamon and 2 tsp water in a dish. Cover with cling film, pierce, microwave for 3 mins on High. Once cooled, put fruit in a container and spoon 2-3 tbsp custard on top. Seal and refrigerate (serves 1).

**Apricot yogurt granola pots** Mix 200g oats, 2 tbsp honey and 1 tbsp sunflower oil in a baking tray. Spread out and bake at 200C/180C fan/ gas 6 for 7 mins. Stir, bake for 7 mins more. Cool. Mix with 150g dried fruits (enough for 8 servings). For one serving, mix 100ml natural yogurt with 1 tbsp sugar-free apricot jam in a container. Store granola in an airtight container and portion into a small bag when packing lunchbox.



**Carrot & pineapple muffins** Sift together 140g self-raising flour, 85g wholemeal flour (reserving about 2 tbsp of the bran), ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda, 2 tsp ground cinnamon and a pinch salt. In another bowl, beat 150ml sunflower oil with 100g golden caster sugar. Add 200g mashed cooked carrots, 3 canned pineapple slices, cut into cubes, 2 tbsp pineapple juice from the can, 1 egg and 1 tsp vanilla extract. Mix in 50g sunflower seeds. Fold dry mix into the wet one. Cut out a dozen 10cm squares of baking parchment and place in the holes of a muffin tin. Spoon mixture into tin, sprinkle with bran and a few sunflower seeds. Bake at 200C/ 180C fan/gas 6 for 20-25 mins or until a skewer comes out clean. Leave to cool (makes 12).

## Try something new

Cheese and pickle is not to be knocked, but if your kids are tired with the same old sandwich fillings then why not try something new?



### Omelette in a bun

Combine two lunchtime favourites for the ultimate mealtime mashup your kids will love. These hearty omelette rolls can either be served warm for a quick dinner or wrapped up for a satisfying veggie packed lunch the next day. Fill the omelettes with juicy cherry tomatoes, crumbled feta and spinach for a mouthwatering bite. You could add extra salad if you like, and older children may like a touch of salsa or pickle as well.

### You're a star sarnies

Use a star-shaped cutter to stamp out six bread stars from the wholemeal bread (freeze the off-cuts to make breadcrumbs). Swirl the red pesto through the cream cheese and spread onto both sides of the stars. Close the sandwich, wrap in cling film and chill in the fridge if making the night before.

### Super salad wraps

Help your kids to pack in the veggies with these super tasty and colourful salad wraps. We've added lots of crunchy veg for texture, whilst cheddar cheese and hummus give a flavour hit. Alternatively, add tuna, chicken or egg.

For more tasty tortillas, try our carrot & hummus roll-ups or chicken roll-ups.



### Creamy smoked mackerel

Skin and flake smoked mackerel fillets, then mix with a little mayonnaise and Greek yogurt. Spread onto thick wholemeal bread and top with crisp lettuce leaves.

### Green club sandwich

Double decking bread just makes sandwiches more exciting - fact. But it also gives you license to squeeze in extra good stuff. This green club sandwich is high on energy, so kids should feel extra alert all the way through double maths. Get creative with simple ingredients.

### Marmite, cheese and cucumber

Try Marmite, grated cheddar and sliced cucumber in a crusty baguette or ciabatta roll. They'll either love it or hate it.

### Cheese and apple

Mix their favourite grated hard cheese with grated apple, chopped spring onions, a squeeze of lemon and a little mayonnaise. Delicious with wholemeal bread or rolls.



I hope this collection of no sandwich lunchbox ideas has inspired you to banish boring lunches forever.

## THE GREEK PITA LUNCHBOX

This box is packed with Mediterranean flavor that your little one will want to dig into!

- chicken cubes
- hummus
- carrots
- red grapes
- pitta bread
- drink



## THE CHEF'S SALAD INSPIRED LUNCHBOX

My kids love a loaded chef's salad...minus the lettuce! This box is packed with the classic salad's topping that the kids adore.

- ham
- cheddar cheese
- hard-boiled egg
- tomatoes and cucumbers with ranch
- green grapes
- croutons
- Organic Kids Smoothie

## THE BREAKFAST LUNCHBOX

People occasionally eat breakfast for dinner, so why not lunch? If there's one thing I know for sure, kids like breakfast at any hour of the day!

- waffles with maple syrup
- blueberries
- raspberries
- Organic Kids Cup



## THE FRIED CHICKEN LUNCHBOX

Leftovers are one of one of my favorite no-sandwich lunchbox staples. More often than not, when we pick up fried chicken for dinner on a busy school night, there's usually a piece or two left over the next day. Cold fried chicken is a kid favorite around here!

- leftover fried chicken
- corn on the cob
- watermelon
- pretzel chips
- Organic Kids Pouch



## THE PIZZA LUNCHBOX

Pizza in the cafeteria is a school-wide favorite. Once again, leftovers make an appearance in this popular lunchbox idea.

- leftover pizza
- bell peppers with ranch
- pineapple
- Organic Kids Smoothie

## THE BURGER LUNCHBOX

See that little burger kabob? Your kids will forget all about the fact that it's their leftover dinner from last night when they open their lunchbox and see this fun presentation!

- leftover burger
- strawberries
- chips
- pickles
- Organic Kids Pouch



## THE TUNA LUNCHBOX

Put tuna on a sandwich and my kid won't eat it. Put tuna in a fun box filled with crackers and celery for scooping.

- tuna salad
- crackers
- celery
- tomatoes
- apples
- Organic Kids Pouch



## THE PASTA LUNCHBOX

Pasta is a great way to be sure you kid's lunchbox will come home empty. Carbs are a great way to help fuel their busy day!

- pasta and marinara
- broccoli with ranch
- oranges
- garlic bread
- Organic Kids Cup

## THE TACO LUNCHBOX

Save this one for Tuesday and include a little "Happy Taco Tuesday" note to make you kiddo smile! You can add some cubed steak or chicken, but my kids love this no-meat Mexican-inspired lunchbox.

- black beans
- cheddar cheese
- tortilla chips with guacamole and salsa
- apples
- tomatoes
- Organic Kids Smoothie







## Easy cheesy ham and corn bread cups

Ingredients	12 serves	24 serves
Wholemeal bread	12 slices	24 slices
Reduced fat margarine	as required	as required
Eggs	12	24
Reduced fat milk	1 cup (250mL)	2 cups (500mL)
Corn kernels, canned and drained	1 x 200g can	1 x 400g can
Reduced fat cheese, grated	1 ½ cups	3 cups
Lean ham, diced	100g	200g

### Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C.
2. Slice the crusts off the bread, and spread one side of each slice of bread thinly with margarine.
3. Push each slice of bread into a hole in a muffin tin, spread side down.
4. In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs and milk.
5. Add the corn kernels, grated cheese and diced ham to the egg mixture.
6. Spoon the egg mixture into the bread cups evenly, until all the mixture has been used.
7. Bake for 20 minutes or until the egg has set.

### Tips

- Serve these as a warm or cold tasty snack.
- Bread cups are an easy way to provide vegetables while catering for many tastes. Try replacing the ham, corn and cheese mixture for different flavour combinations, such as spinach (or roast pumpkin) and reduced fat feta, chicken (skinless) and mushrooms, baked beans and capsicum, or tuna (in spring water) and chopped onions.
- Try adding fresh or dried herbs to boost the flavour.
- If using stale or thicker 'toast' sliced bread, lightly roll it with a rolling pin for better results.

**Category: Everyday (Green)**



## Easy egg and ham slice

Makes 12 medium or 18 small/snack sized servings

### Ingredients

- 2 zucchinis, grated
- 1 onion, peeled and chopped
- 1 large carrot, peeled and grated
- 4 slices of lean ham, chopped (Or 3 rashers of bacon, fat removed, chopped. Leave the meat out altogether for a vegetarian alternative)
- 1 cup (115g) reduced fat cheese, grated
- 1 cup (150g) self-raising flour
- 6 eggs, beaten
- Cracked pepper to season

### Method

1. Preheat oven to 180° C.
2. Mix all ingredients together in a large bowl.
3. Pour into a greased slice tray and bake for 30 to 45 minutes until slightly browned on top and set in the centre.
4. Cut into slices. Serve warm or cold.

### Tips

- Don't mention the veg! Naming it 'Egg and ham slice' rather than 'Zucchini slice' may make it more appealing to students.
- For variations, try replacing the ham with 1 cup of tuna, or the carrot with half a cup of canned corn.
- Serve with a salad to make into a meal for upper primary and secondary school students.
- Remove the ham to make a vegetarian version.

**Category: Everyday (green)**



## Fried rice

Ingredients	10 regular serves or 20 small serves	15 regular serves or 30 small serves	25 regular serves or 50 small serves
Rice, long grain (uncooked)	5 cups (1kg)	7 cups (1.4kg)	12 cups (2.4kg)
Sesame oil	1 tablespoon	1 ½ tablespoons	2 tablespoons
Eggs, beaten	6 medium	10 medium	16 medium
Carrots, finely diced	3 medium	5 medium	8 medium (approx 500g)
Peas, frozen	1 ½ cups	2 ½ cups	4 cups
Red capsicum, finely diced	1 ½	2 ½	4
Soy sauce (salt reduced)	5 tablespoons (100mL)	7 tablespoons (140mL)	12 tablespoons (240mL)
Spring onions, chopped	5	7	12

## Method

1. Cook rice according to packet instructions.
2. Heat half the oil in a large wok over high heat. Add the eggs and swirl to make an omelette. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes or until cooked through, then slide onto a chopping board to cool.
3. Heat the remaining oil. Add the vegetables and stir fry for 2 to 3 minutes.
4. Slice the omelette into thin strips and return to the wok.
5. Add the rice and cook for a further 2 minutes.
6. Add the soy sauce and half the spring onions. Stir to combine. Remove from heat.
7. Serve the fried rice garnished with the remaining spring onions.

## Tip

- The smaller sized serve is ideal for primary schools.
- For a non-vegetarian version, add some lean ham, cooked skinless chicken breast or tuna canned in spring water at Step 3.
- Any frozen or seasonal vegetables can be used for this recipe. Zucchini and corn kernels are a good combination.

**Category: Everyday (green)**



## Avocado smash bruschetta

Ingredients	10 serves	15 serves	25 serves
Avocado, peeled, stone removed	600g	900g	1.5kg
Olive oil	50mL	75mL	125mL
Lemon juice	80mL	120mL	200mL
Black pepper, ground	to taste	to taste	to taste
Paprika, ground	½ teaspoon	¾ teaspoon	1 ½ teaspoons
Basil, finely chopped	1 cup	1 ½ cups	2 ½ cups
Sourdough bread stick, sliced	1 breadsticks	1 ½ breadsticks	2 ½ breadsticks
Tomatoes, sliced	4	6	10

### Method

1. Preheat grill to high.
2. In a bowl, gently mash the avocado with a fork to a chunky consistency.
3. Add the olive oil, lemon juice, pepper, and paprika to the mashed avocado and mix well.
4. Add some of the basil (reserving some for garnish) and gently combine.
5. Toast bread slices under the grill for 15 to 20 seconds each side, until lightly golden.
6. Spread each slice with 2 slices of tomato, and top with avocado.
7. Serve each slice with a sprinkle of chopped basil and black pepper.

### Tips

- Use any leftover avocado mixture as a topping for baked potatoes or a healthy sandwich spread.
- This is a great addition to the canteen menu as a snack or breakfast option, as it's easy to prepare and to eat!
- Try different types of breads, such as toasted wholemeal, grainy, seeded, or rye toast slice breads or toasted pita pockets.
- For variety, crumble a small amount of reduced fat feta over the top for a more intense flavour.

**Category: Everyday (Green)**



## Easy egg and ham slice

Makes 12 medium or 18 small/snack sized servings

### Ingredients

- 2 zucchinis, grated
- 1 onion, peeled and chopped
- 1 large carrot, peeled and grated
- 4 slices of lean ham, chopped (Or 3 rashers of bacon, fat removed, chopped. Leave the meat out altogether for a vegetarian alternative)
- 1 cup (115g) reduced fat cheese, grated
- 1 cup (150g) self-raising flour
- 6 eggs, beaten
- Cracked pepper to season

### Method

1. Preheat oven to 180° C.
2. Mix all ingredients together in a large bowl.
3. Pour into a greased slice tray and bake for 30 to 45 minutes until slightly browned on top and set in the centre.
4. Cut into slices. Serve warm or cold.

### Tips

- Don't mention the veg! Naming it 'Egg and ham slice' rather than 'Zucchini slice' may make it more appealing to students.
- For variations, try replacing the ham with 1 cup of tuna, or the carrot with half a cup of canned corn.
- Serve with a salad to make into a meal for upper primary and secondary school students.
- Remove the ham to make a vegetarian version.

**Category: Everyday (green)**



## Zesty pesto pasta salad

Serves: 8 large salads or 16 side salads

### Ingredients

- 250g uncooked farfelle pasta, or pasta shells
- ½ cup (80g) basil pesto
- Juice of 1 lemon (4 tablespoons)
- 2 tomatoes, diced
- 2 onions, chopped
- 200g mixed lettuce leaves, coarsely chopped
- 1 x 400g can of chickpeas, drained and rinsed

### Method

1. Cook pasta in a large saucepan of boiling water, according to packet instructions. Drain cooked pasta, and rinse under cold water. Drain and set aside in a large bowl.
2. In a small bowl, combine the basil pesto and lemon juice to make the salad dressing; then gently mix the pesto dressing through the pasta.
3. In a large mixing bowl, combine the pasta (with dressing), and tomato, onion, lettuce and chickpeas.
4. Serve as a main item, or in half-size serves for a tasty side dish.

**Category: Everyday (green)**



## Mexican salad

Serves: 8 large salads or 16 side salads.

### Ingredients

- 6 pita breads, chopped into small triangles and roasted
- 1 x 400g can 4 bean mix, drained and rinsed
- 2 tomatoes, diced
- 1 capsicum, diced
- ½ lettuce head or 120g lettuce leaves, chopped
- 1 x 400g can corn kernels, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup grated reduced fat cheese
- 1 jar (approx. 400mL) of mild tomato salsa
- 1 tablespoon natural or Greek yoghurt, to top each salad (optional)

### Method

1. Preheat oven to 180 degrees.
2. Place pita squares on a lined oven tray and roast for 15 minutes.
3. In a large mixing bowl, combine all ingredients except the pita bread, and toss lightly to mix.
4. Serve in bowls, sprinkled with the pita bread croutons on top and a dollop of yoghurt.

### Tips

- This salad could be also served as a side salad to chicken or fish pieces to 'green up' the meal.
- Turn this salad into a burrito for secondary school students! Simply add a few spoonfuls of the salad to a wholemeal pita, or wrap bread and drizzle with yoghurt before wrapping it up.

**Category: Everyday (green)**



## Banana raspberry muffins

Ingredients	12 serves (24 mini muffins)	24 serves (48 mini muffins)
Ripe bananas	2 large	4 large
Vanilla essence	1 teaspoon	2 teaspoons
Baking soda	¼ teaspoon	½ teaspoon
Milk, reduced fat	¾ cup (180mL)	1½ cups (375mL)
Egg	1	2
Canola oil (or other poly or monounsaturated oil)	1/3 cup (80mL)	2/3 cup (160mL)
Self-raising flour, white	1 cup (150g)	2 cups (300g)
Self-raising flour, wholemeal	1 cup (160g)	2 cups (320g)
Cocoa	1 tablespoon	2 tablespoons
Sugar	¼ cup (55g)	½ cup (110g)
Raspberries, frozen	1 cup (225g)	2 cups (450g)

### Method

1. Pre-heat oven to 200°C.
2. In a medium bowl, mash the bananas with a fork and mix in vanilla essence.
3. Add the baking soda and milk.
4. In a separate bowl, lightly beat the eggs and add the oil, then add the banana mixture, stirring well.
5. In a large bowl, sift the flours and cocoa together, then add the sugar.
6. Make a well in the centre of the flour mix. Slowly add the liquid ingredients and the raspberries, then fold to combine. Be careful not to over stir.
7. Pour mixture directly into non-stick muffin trays, or line with paper cases, and bake for 20-25 minutes.
8. Take muffins out of tray and allow to cool on a cake rack.

### Tips

- For variety, replace the raspberries with different types of seasonal fruit, frozen fruit or canned fruit, such as canned peaches (in natural juice).
- You can also leave out the raspberries and increase the oil to ½ cup (12 serves) for [Cocoabanana muffins](#)

**Category: Select Carefully (Amber)**





## Mini muesli muffins

Makes: 24 mini muffins

### Ingredients

- 1½ cups (130g) untoasted muesli
- 1 cup (150g) wholemeal self-raising flour, sifted
- ½ cup (115g) sugar
- 1 large green apple, grated
- 2 medium carrots, grated
- ½ cup (80g) sultanas
- 2 eggs, beaten
- ⅓ cup oil (80mL), canola or light olive
- 1 cup (250mL) milk, reduced fat

### Method

1. Preheat oven to 190°C.
2. Place muesli, sifted flour, sugar, apple, carrots, sultanas into a bowl. Mix together.
3. Combine eggs, oil and milk in a separate bowl.
4. Add liquid ingredients to dry ingredients and mix gently until just combined.
5. Spoon mixture into 24 mini muffin cases or place in 2 x 12-hole non-stick mini muffin trays.
6. Bake mini muffins for 30 minutes.

### Tips

- Mini muffin trays are a great investment for the canteen. Small sized patty cake cases or friand tins are also suitable.
- You can replace the sultanas and muesli with other varieties of dried fruit or wholegrain cereals if you don't have these specific types on hand.

**Category: Select Carefully (amber)**



## Cocoabanana muffins

Ingredients	12 serves (24 mini muffins)	24 serves (48 mini muffins)
Ripe bananas	2 large	4 large
Vanilla essence	1 teaspoon	2 teaspoons
Baking soda	¼ teaspoon	½ teaspoon
Milk, reduced fat	¾ cup (180mL)	1½ cup (375mL)
Egg	1	2
Canola oil	½ cup (125mL)	1 cup (250mL)
Self-raising flour, white	1 cup (150g)	2 cups (300g)
Self-raising flour, wholemeal	1 cup (160g)	2 cups (320g)
Cocoa	1 tablespoon	2 tablespoons
Sugar	¼ cup (55g)	½ cup (110g)

### Method

1. Pre-heat oven to 200°C.
2. In a medium bowl, mash the bananas with a fork then mix in the vanilla essence.
3. Add the baking soda and milk.
4. In a separate bowl, lightly beat the eggs and add the oil, then add the banana mixture, stirring well.
5. In a large bowl, sift the flours and cocoa together, then add the sugar.
6. Make a well in the centre of the flour mix. Slowly add the liquid ingredients and fold to combine. Be careful not to over stir.
7. Pour mixture directly into non-stick muffin trays, or line with paper cases, and bake for 15-20 minutes.
8. Take muffins out of tray and allow to cool on a cake rack.

### Tips

- For variety, reduce oil to only 1/3 cup and add 1 cup frozen raspberries.
- Alternatively, replace the raspberries with different types of seasonal fruit, frozen fruit or canned fruit, such as canned peaches (in natural juice)

**Category: Select Carefully (Amber)**



## Ooodles of noodles

This recipe is quick and easy, and better than instant noodles dishes. Plus, you know it's healthy as it's full of vegetables!

**Serves: 12 small or 6 large serves**

### Ingredients

- 6 cakes of plain instant noodles
- 2 cups (160g) diced frozen vegetables
- 1 cup (160g) lean ham, diced
- 1 small jar (175g) of honey soy stir-fry sauce or 1 cup sweet chilli sauce

### Method

1. Discard noodle seasoning and cook noodles following packet directions.
2. Add frozen vegetables and cook for 5 more minutes.
3. Drain water from noodles and vegetables.
4. Stir in diced ham and sauce.
5. Heat for an additional 3 to 4 minutes.

### Handy tips

- Serve in noodle boxes, foam cups or plastic tubs.
- Use the Ooodles of Noodles marketing poster to assist in promoting this menu item.

**Category: Select Carefully (amber)**

## Food suggestions for lunch boxes

There are lots of food choices available for lunch boxes. However, it can sometimes be difficult to decide which foods are healthy choices. Suggestions include:

- **Fruit** - best choices include fresh or tinned fruit. Dried fruit is sticky and high in sugar, so have it occasionally. Best left out of the lunch box are dried fruit bars and 'straps', which are very high in sugar, low in fibre and stick to children's teeth.
- **Vegetables** - try vegetable sticks with dip or a small container with mixed vegetables such as cherry tomatoes, carrot sticks, capsicum and cucumber. Chips and packets of crisps are best left for parties and special occasions.
- **Milk, yoghurt and custard** - include a small drink of milk (freeze overnight) wrapped in a cloth in the lunch box. Fruit yoghurts should be kept cool in an insulated lunch box. Best left out of the lunch box are 'dairy desserts' and flavoured milks, which are high in sugar.
- **Dips, cheese and biscuits** - pre-packaged or your own homemade versions of cheese and crackers are fine. Children enjoy mini packaged cheeses. Avoid sweet dips such as chocolate spreads. 'Oven-baked' savoury biscuits are just as high in salt and fat as chips and are best avoided.
- **Different breads add interest** - include a variety of bread, especially if children begin to lose interest in sandwiches. Try bread rolls, pita bread, flat bread, bagels, fruit loaf or buns, foccacias, scones, pikelets, muffins, crumpets, crispbreads, rice cakes or corn thins.
- **Vary the fillings** - fillings can include vegemite or other yeast extract, cheese (try different types), tuna, egg, sliced cold meats, baked beans, grated carrot and lettuce, chopped roast meat with pickles or chutney, and avocado. Dips like taramosalata, chickpea, hoummus, cucumber, yoghurt, tzatziki or spinach also make good spreads. Avoid chocolate spreads, jams and honey, and fatty meats like salami.
- **Muffins and cakes** - try making your own muffins and cakes as a great way to include more fruit and vegetables. Examples include sultana, carrot, zucchini, banana or pumpkin. Donuts and creamy cakes are best offered at birthdays and special occasions instead of in lunch boxes.
- **Muesli and 'breakfast' bars** - almost all 'bars' are too high in sugar to include regularly, but cereal bars may be better for teeth than chewy sticky muesli bars. Try to avoid muesli bars and chocolate bars in lunch boxes. These are expensive and usually stuck together with fats and sugars.

## Food safety in lunch boxes

In most cases, food is stored in lunch boxes for several hours, so the lunch box needs to stay cool. Food safety suggestions include:

- Choose an insulated lunch box or one with a freezer pack, or include a wrapped frozen water bottle to keep the lunch box cool.
- Follow hygienic food preparation methods. This is especially important when food will be stored in the lunch box for many hours before eating.
- Prepare lunches the night before and store in the fridge or freezer.
- Perishable foods such as dairy products, eggs and sliced meats should be kept cool and eaten within about four hours of preparation. Don't pack these foods if just cooked. First cool in the refrigerator overnight.

## Find out why they're not eating their lunch

There may be a variety of reasons why your child does not eat all the food in their lunch box. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- **The lunch box style** - your child may have an issue with their lunch container. They might prefer a brown paper bag or want the latest fashion in lunch boxes. It may be difficult for them to open.
- **Boredom** - try to pack a different lunch every day. For younger children, cut the sandwiches in different ways to add interest: for example triangles, squares or strips. You could even use one slice of white and one slice of brown to make a 'zebra' sandwich.
- **Too dry** - if they say the filling is too dry, try leaving a sandwich uncut. Some fillings like dips may stay fresher this way. If your child's appetite seems small, offer smaller servings. For example, half a sandwich might be more appropriate than a whole one.
- **Fiddly and sticky** - make sure the foods are manageable and easy to eat. Some children are put off by fiddly packaging or don't like getting sticky hands. Fruit can be made easier to eat. For example, remove orange peel or cut a kiwifruit in half and include a spoon in the lunch box.
- **Make other meals count** - if your child hardly eats anything from their lunch box despite your best efforts, try to at least ensure they have a nutritious breakfast and dinner. Trust that your child will eat when hungry.

### **Coping with a selective eater**

- **Involve your child** in planning and preparing their lunchbox - kids are more likely to try foods that they've been involved in selecting and making. Make this an interesting and fun activity, so that they want to get involved.
- **Children are happier** choosing from a small range of foods. If your child seems to pick just one or two favoured things every day, this is not unusual - gradually introduce more options but be prepared to be patient.
- **Offer a wide variety of wholegrain carbohydrates to choose from.** If they don't like wholemeal bread, how about swapping to pasta, rice couscous or quinoa, jacket potatoes, sweet potatoes or try a wrap or pitta bread. Beans and lentils work well too and can be blended into a dip (e.g. hummus).
- **Talk with your child about things that they might like to try,** or foods that their friends are eating. Invite friends over as an opportunity to engage your child.
- **It's normal for children to go through phases of liking and disliking things** - it's part of growing up. If one food isn't a hit, perseverance and patience are key. Keep exposing your child to the food (up to 20-30 times) and if they consistently decline, try not to make a fuss over it, just remove it and try again another day.
- **Talk with other parents** and use their child's healthy appetite as an example for yours to follow.
- **Don't use food as a reward** - this reinforces the idea that sugary, fatty foods are better options than healthy whole fruit or dairy products.