



Let's do **LUNCH**

You and your children can all benefit from a nutritious lunch box, says Vanessa Schuldt

It's time to start thinking about packed lunches again. Creating a balanced lunch box that gets the thumbs up from everyone isn't as daunting as it may seem. Read on to discover the elements of a winning, healthy lunch box.

Midday fuel for your children

Children of primary school age and teens need a wealth of nutritious foods to learn, grow and go. Keep these top six nutrition pointers top of

mind when planning and packing lunch for your crew.

1 FUEL TO LEARN AND BURN

It's been proven that diet quality affects academic performance. Students who consistently eat a poor-quality diet are significantly more likely to perform poorly at school. The brain needs glucose to function as do active bodies, so nutritious

carbohydrates are a must in the lunch box.

Pack: **Grain-based foods.**

Try: Sliced bread, rolls, wraps and pita pockets (preferably wholegrain, high fibre, or enriched with omega-3, iron or calcium), crispbreads, rice cakes, crackers, popcorn, pasta, rice, bean mix, couscous, fruit slice biscuits, mini fruit muffins, date scones and wholemeal pikelets.



2 AN APPLE A DAY

A lifetime habit of eating two serves of fruit plus five serves of vegetables each day can help prevent heart disease, some forms of cancer, obesity and constipation. Help your children reach the recommended intake by adding fruit and veg to their lunch box every day.

Pack: 1 serve of fruit + some vegetables.

Try: Whole or sliced fruit, fruit salad, fruit snack pack, dried fruit, vegetable batons (such as carrot and celery sticks) or corn on the cob.

white meat, fish and eggs also provide valuable sources. Iron absorption from plant foods is enhanced when paired with a vitamin-C-rich food.

Pack: A portion of lean meat or an iron alternative.

Try: Sliced roast beef or kangaroo, lean lamb cutlet, mini meatballs, honey/soy chicken drumsticks, canned tuna, hard-boiled egg, baked beans, bean mix, wholegrain or iron-enriched bread.

3 IRON OUT THE ISSUES

Iron-deficient children have been shown to have difficulty with coordination, body balance and language skills, and even score lower on mental development tests. Red meat is the best source of absorbable iron, while

4 CALCIUM TO THE BONE RESCUE

Calcium is the skeleton's best friend, helping to buffer all those bumps and falls. Children need two to three daily serves of dairy. Calcium needs peak when the teen years hit, increasing to three to four daily serves, with one serve being: 1 glass (250ml) of milk, 1 tub (200g) of yoghurt, or 2 slices (40g) of cheese. ►



Reduced-fat dairy foods are recommended for children over two years.

Pack: 1 serve of reduced-fat dairy.

Try: Reduced-fat cheese, spreadable cream cheese, cheese cubes/sticks, yoghurt, custard, plain or flavoured milk, calcium-enriched soy milk and tzatziki dip.

5 OMEGA-3S PLEASE

Enhance your kids' learning potential with omega-3 fatty acids (specifically DHA and EPA). DHA is essential for brain development and function, whereas EPA influences behaviour and mood. Research indicates that an omega-3 deficiency in early childhood may contribute to behavioural and learning difficulties. The target is two to three weekly serves of oily fish.

Pack: Fish or a food fortified with omega-3 (most days).

Try: Plain or flavoured tuna, salmon, or an omega-3-enriched food like omega-3-rich bread, eggs, milk and yoghurt.

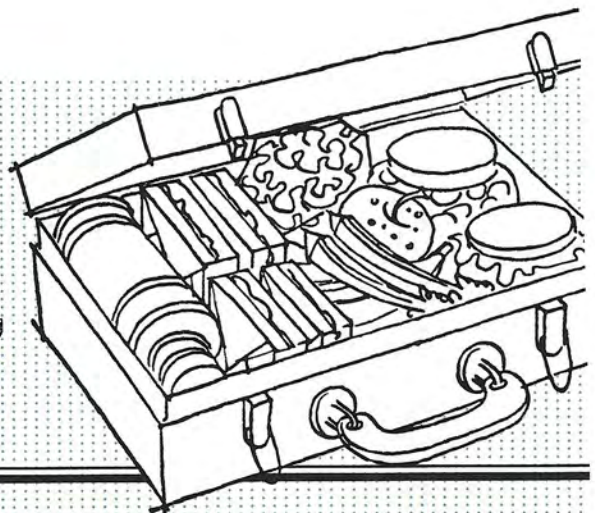
6 WATER WELL

Being dehydrated can leave children feeling tired and lethargic, with negative repercussions for learning at school. A water bottle is a must in the lunch box. Save fruit juice and cordial for an after-school treat and limit to a 250ml serve.

Pack: 250ml (or larger) bottle of water.

Try: Keep it cool by freezing half a drink bottle of water and then topping it up with tap water in the morning.

LIFTING THE LID



Little mite



Lunch box #1

Tip Top UP Wraps High Fibre & Omega 3 with curried omega-3 egg, lettuce and carrot | Green seedless grapes | *Uncle Tobys Chewy Muesli Bar, Forest Fruits flavour* | Brownes CalciYum milk with banana flavour | *Water bottle*



Lunch box #2

Arnott's Vita-Weat Lunch Slices (Sunflower, Pumpkin & Canola) with margarine, reduced-fat cheese and sliced turkey | Half a large mango cheek | *Coolpak Popcorn* | Vaalia Kids Strawberry Yoghurt (squeezable pouch with omega-3) | *Water bottle*



Lunch box #3

Vegetable batons, hummus dip, cheese cubes and Tip Top UP Wraps High Fibre + Oats with Iron cut into triangles | Pear | *Slice of Bürgen Fruit & Muesli bread with margarine and honey* | *Water bottle*

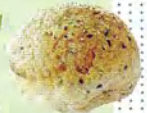


Hungry Teen



Lunch box #1

Bakers Delight Hi-Fibre, Lo-GI White Roll with reduced-fat cheese, semi-dried tomatoes and rocket | Fresh fruit salad | *John West Tuna To Go, Lemon & Cracked Pepper* | *Ski D'Lite Peach & Mango Yoghurt* | *Water bottle*



Lunch box #2

Norganic Wholemeal Wraps with Chia, with hummus, chicken and salad | Mandarin | *Homemade cheese and zucchini muffin** | Brownes CalciYum Milk with chocolate flavour | *Water bottle*



Lunch box #3

Vegetable sticks, an omega-3 enriched hard-boiled egg, EatRite Brown Rice Crackers (Tamar-Seaweed), salsa and tzatziki dip | Watermelon cubes | *Vaalia Light French Vanilla probiotic yoghurt* | *Water bottle*



*www.cathyskitchen.energyaustralia.com.au

Need some lunch box inspiration? These ideas are sure to impress.

Grown-up girl



Lunch box #1



Wattle Valley Wholegrain Soft Wraps filled with lean roast beef, salad and mango chutney | Corn on the cob | Berry fruit salad – strawberries, blueberries, blackberries | Sanitarium Up & Go Vive Banana | Water bottle

Lunch box #2

Salad Nicoise with a slice of wholegrain bread* | Honeydew melon cubes with passionfruit | Tamar Valley 98% Fat Free, No Added Sugar, Greek Style Yoghurt with Strawberry | Water bottle



Lunch box #3



Bürgen Soy-Lin Bread with chicken, sweet potato, ricotta, cucumber and spinach** | Angas Park Soft & Juicy Apricots, 25g portion pack | Peach | Vaalia Low Fat Tropical Basket probiotic yoghurt | Water bottle

*www.heartfoundation.org.au/recipes
**www.burgen.com.au/recipes



MIDDAY FUEL FOR YOU

Just as kids need a high-quality diet to fuel the body and mind, so do adults. Earn some brownie points in the nutrition stakes by adopting these tips.

- 1 **IRON** With iron status affecting brain function and concentration levels, a large number of women may be selling themselves short when it comes to work tasks that require mental input. The target for women aged 19-50 years is 18mg of iron daily. *Pack: A portion of lean meat, fish or chicken, or a serve of legumes such as lentils or beans.*
- 2 **CALCIUM** Osteoporosis affects one in two Australian women over 60. Daily intakes of calcium are required to slow down the bone loss that occurs naturally with age. *Pack: 1 serve of reduced-fat dairy – yoghurt is a good option.*
- 3 **ANTIOXIDANTS** Antioxidants protect us from the forces of ageing and disease, so it makes sense

to eat more of these nutritious gems. *Pack: A variety of vegetables, fruits, legumes, wholegrains, nuts, seeds, fish, shellfish and lean meats.*

4 **FIBRE** As well as being great for your digestive system, dietary fibre also helps stabilise blood sugar levels, lower 'bad' LDL-cholesterol and even help keep weight under control. Women need about 30g of fibre daily. *Pack: Vegetables, fruits (fresh and dried), legumes, wholegrain breads and high-fibre breakfast cereals.*

5 **HYDRATION** Having diminished levels of fluid can zap energy levels. It can also trick the body into thinking you're hungry when, in fact, you're thirsty, which can have dire consequences for your waistline. *Pack: 1 litre bottle of water.* ☺