



HEALTHY LUNCH BOXES

TASTY TIPS FOR LIFE ON THE GO

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WELCOME TO YOUR IINH EBOOK

Packed with delicious, nutritious Lunch Box ideas!

Do you sometimes struggle with ideas for the next day's on-the-go lunch for yourself or the kids?

Making up lunch boxes can become such a chore, and we can end up with the same foods over and over again.

This eBook comes packed with fresh ideas that will hopefully inspire you to prepare and enjoy packed lunches once again.

This is what you'll find inside:

- Simple tips for including more nutritious choices
- Quick, practical ideas for healthier options with little prep time
- Smart combining for balanced meals
- From sandwiches to smoothies – choices to suit everyone
- Healthy lunch options in the supermarket dash
- Why a good variety of foods and nutrients is important for a healthy lunch box.

WATER

However young or old we are, water is always a key part of lunch.

When thirsty, many people unthinkingly reach for fizzy drinks or juices. But the truth is that the body is really asking for water. It can be common to give children a juice or milk carton for school but it's always important to ensure that they also have plain water to drink.

The average amount of water in the human body is around 70% - even more in children

So it's no wonder that when people are even slightly dehydrated they can feel a lack of energy or get headaches, suffer constipation or feel hungry! Water is vital to transport nutrients to our cells and for eliminating toxins. It also helps in preventing unwanted snacking, because sometimes we mistake thirst signals for hunger.

Smart things to consider

Avoid leaving plastic bottles in hot environments, such as the car. Good quality water bottles are easy to find now instead of single-use plastic bottles. Invest in a reusable glass or stainless steel bottle. Aim to drink around 1 1/2 - 2 litres per day for an adult. Less for children, but always offer them water when they look for a drink or for a snack between meals.

People need more water during warmer weather, exercising, and particularly when drinking alcohol!

Children should always have water with them when participating in sports.



ARE YOU DRINKING ENOUGH?

The best way to know that you are getting enough water is to check the colour of the urine. If it is dark and cloudy this indicates you are not drinking enough.

BREADS, CRACKERS & GRAINS

Breads, crackers and grains are a useful source of carbohydrates, as well as an important source of energy and fibre – if unrefined.

But too much refined or processed carb foods, such as white breads, pasta, rice - and of course sugar - are a major problem with our modern diet.

The problem when flour or grain is processed or refined:

- Fibre is lost. Dietary fibre is essential for a healthy digestive system. It not only keeps bowel eliminations regular but also feeds the microbiome – the trillions of gut bacteria that help regulate inflammation, digest food, metabolize nutrients and communicate with body systems.
- Vitamins and minerals are lost, too. If refined foods are a big part of what we eat each day, this is how nutrient ‘gaps’ develop, leading to deficiencies and ultimately dysfunction or disease caused by a form of malnutrition: too much energy (calories) but not enough nutrients.

Contrast between wholemeal/whole grain and refined white carbs

All carbs break down into sugar upon digestion. However, refined white bread, pasta or rice break down faster than less refined/processed versions due to their lower levels of fibre. Faster-releasing carbs like white bread and pasta give us a quick boost, often followed by an energy ‘crash’. This happens less with fibre-rich carbs like wholemeal types of bread, pasta and porridge, which provide more sustained energy levels.

It is really helpful to include these ‘smarter’ breads and grains in your lunch box. Choose wholemeal breads, crackers, crispbreads, or brown pasta, rice or other whole grains. These release more slow, steady energy while nourishing your gut flora and keeping you regular.



TIPS

Include wholemeal flour products and whole grains

Providing slow-released energy, whole grains contain more fibre, minerals and vitamins, and are also known as low-GI foods. They release energy more smoothly over a longer period, which results in more balanced, sustained energy, minimizes the need to snack between meals and keeps digestion running smoothly.

These foods include wholemeal-based breads and pasta, rye crackers, porridge oats, oatcakes and whole grain muesli, as well as non-gluten grains such as quinoa, buckwheat and millet, among others.

Avoid white breads and grains

These high GI carb products provide fast-releasing energy that can lead to a dip or slump in energy levels. They are best avoided as much as possible.

Fast-releasing foods include sugar, confectionery, white bread, white pasta, white rice, wraps, buns, cakes, biscuits and most breakfast cereals.





SUGAR

Most snack foods are high in sugar. This can have an impact on energy levels, leading to energy dips, cravings, weight gain, hormone disturbances, as well as reduced concentration and productivity at work.

Sugar can also play a huge role in behavioural issues in children, including poor concentration, hyperactivity and feeling tired or moody.

Eating refined sugar tends to 'crowd out' nutrient-rich foods – most parents will have seen how snacking before a meal can ruin their child's appetite! Moreover, sugar has been shown to block vitamin C from entering body cells, which weakens immunity and leaves them more susceptible to respiratory illness.

If consumed sugar is not needed for energy, it gets converted to stored fat. So if an adult or child consumes a high-sugar snack while at their desk or watching TV, any sugar not burned off as energy will get laid down as fat - typically around the waist!

TIPS

- When looking to hit your sweet taste buds, try natural sweet foods such as fruit – nature's way of getting vitamins in!
- The bitter taste of dark chocolate stops us from consuming too much of it.
- Try home baking so you can control how much sugar is used. For example, get the children involved and use half the amount of sugar that the recipe calls for. You can also supplement sugar with apple sauce, dates or mashed banana - children don't usually notice!

The WHO has sugar intake guidelines for adults and children (see next page). These refer to added sugar,

e.g. added to tea or coffee, and to baked goods, treats, breakfast cereals, pasta sauces etc. Added sugar also includes fruit juice and honey, but not sugars naturally present in foods such as fruits and dried fruits.

TIPS

For the sugar content in packaged foods, look at the ingredient list. And on the nutrition label, check 'Carbohydrates, of which sugar'. 4 g sugar equals one rounded teaspoon.

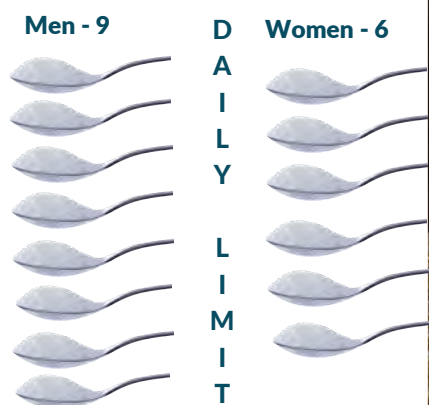
Check The Label

Sugar per 100g		
Low	Moderate	High
<5g	5 - 15g	>15g

**High sugar items are best avoided*

The WHO Recommendations For Children:

- **10 yrs+:** no more than 7 tsp per day
- **7-10yrs:** no more than 6 tsp per day
- **4-6yrs:** no more than 5 tsp per day



MEAT, FISH, DAIRY & PLANT PROTEIN

Sources of protein such as meat, fish, eggs, nuts and seeds are essential for the formation and repair of all cells, muscles and tissues.

Protein is broken down into amino acids, which are used to produce structural proteins like collagen as well as enzymes, antibodies, hormones and neurotransmitters. Protein is vital for keeping the immune system strong and mood balanced.

Protein-rich foods also helped to stabilise blood sugar levels, so when combined with whole grains such as brown rice, wholemeal bread or oatcakes they provide longer-lasting energy without the dips. For adults, these foods support better productivity at home and at work while for children and students, they help with concentration and learning.

The 2 main sources of protein are

Animal Protein

- Meat
- Fish
- Eggs
- Dairy
- Poultry

Plant Protein

- Beans, peas, lentils
- Nuts, Seeds
- Tofu, Tempeh and other soy foods
- *Wheat, Rye, Barley, Oats, Quinoa, Buckwheat
- Mushrooms, Quorn

**Grains are known as carb-rich foods, but they also contain protein - some more than others, e.g. oats and quinoa have about 12% protein, while rice has only about 8% protein.*

Although animal foods naturally contain much higher levels of protein than plant foods, a varied diet is always preferable for health - and only plants give us dietary fibre! So it is best to combine plant foods in meals along with animal foods like meat, fish, eggs etc.



FATS & OILS

As well as being our best source of energy, healthy fats are essential components of every cell in the body. Certain fats are particularly vital for the structure and function of the brain.

Fat stores under the skin keep us warm in winter and help protect us from injury.

Cholesterol, a fat-like substance, is concentrated in brain tissues and forms the basis of many hormones.

Fat is a concentrated source of energy for little ones that do not eat very much, particularly for babies and their brains which are developing at an enormous rate. Full fat is recommended for babies and children, as the fat also helps in the absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K.

The 2 main types of fat are:

Saturated Fats

Saturated fats mostly come from animal sources, such as meat, full-fat milk, cheese and butter. The main plant sources are palm oil and coconut oil.

Our body is able to manufacture saturated fats, but eating moderate amounts is fine, as long as we consume good quality unsaturated fats, too.

Unsaturated Fats

Unsaturated fats, such as olive oil and unrefined seed oil, are useful for cooking and salads. However, it is best to minimize the use of regular 'supermarket' cooking oils, like rapeseed oil, corn oil and sunflower oil, as they have lost most of their nutrients during heavy processing and refining.

Omega oils (omega 3 and 6) are so-called 'essential fats'. Our body cannot manufacture these, so they must be consumed regularly, as they are needed for brain health and a host of vital functions around the body, including regulating inflammation. They are also key molecules for supporting mood, learning and concentration, heart and immune health and joints.

Omega 6 and omega 3 oils are found in common foods, though many people do not eat enough omega 3-containing foods, such as oily fish. Below you will see useful sources of omega-3 and omega-6 oils.



Omega 3

- Flax and chia seeds
- Unrefined rapeseed oil, flax oil
- Oily Fish: mackerel, sardines, anchovies, herring, salmon, trout.

Omega 6

- Nuts, seeds, nut & seed 'butter'
- Seed oils: corn, sunflower, safflower, rapeseed, sesame, peanut
- Butter, lard, beef fat & dripping
- Mayonnaise (from seed oil)



COOKING WITH OILS

Butter & Coconut Oil

Sources of saturated Fat, such as butter, ghee, goose fat, lard and coconut oil, are stable under higher temperatures and therefore ideal to cook with.

Tip: Some brands offer coconut oil where the flavour has been removed by steaming the oil. This is a good option if you do not like the taste or smell of coconut.

Olive Oil

Olive oil is a source of monounsaturated omega 9, which gives it some stability when heated. Regular olive oil is a good option for light frying, such as stir-fry dishes.

Tip: The more expensive virgin or extra-virgin olive oils are cold-pressed and best reserved for salads or added to dishes after cooking.

Cold-Pressed, Extra-Virgin, Nuts & Seed Oils

Sources of polyunsaturated fats include nut and seed oils such as sesame, sunflower and rapeseed. These are best bought unrefined, cold-pressed or extra virgin in a dark glass bottle.

Tip: They are the best oils to use as salad dressings or added to dishes after cooking. Nut & seed oils are very unstable and best kept in dark, cold storage to retain their health benefits.

FRUIT & VEGETABLES

Fruit & vegetables provide us with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants for supporting the health of bones, muscles, eyes, nerves, brain and immune system, among others.

Eating a diversity of wholesome foods throughout the week, instead of the same meals every day, will provide the wide spectrum of healthy micronutrients needed to sustain good health. It is wise to remember that while supplements may be able to safeguard against certain deficiencies, nature provides us with whole foods that deliver every nutrient we need.

A varied diet of mainly whole foods is the only way to be sure to get all key nutrients naturally. Aim for 1-2 portions daily of a variety of fruits, plus 5-7 portions of vegetables, with as many colours as possible.

Certain nutrients are absorbed better when others are also present, e.g.:

- Iron absorption is improved by vitamin C (tip - fresh leafy greens contain both!)
- Vitamin D* is required for us to absorb calcium, needed for healthy growth of bones and teeth, as well as a host of other vital functions for both physical and mental health.

**It is not possible to get sufficient vitamin D from food. Sunlight can create sufficient vitamin D in the skin during the summer months, but not in winter. It is recommended to take a regular vitamin D supplement during winter (or use a UVB Vitamin D lamp). After a few months, ideally, check the blood level to make sure you are taking the correct dose of vitamin D.*



TIPS

Your lunch box is a good opportunity to 'eat a rainbow' every day - the range of colours provides a wide array of antioxidants to support health and longevity. Include some colourful raw vegetables and salad. For warming foods use soups, stews or curries, with lots of veggies. For kids, blend veggies into pasta sauces and pour them into a flask for school. Smoothies are also a great way to get fruit and vegetables into young ones - but don't make them too sweet!

Maintaining variety in family meals helps children to be open to trying new foods - even later in life, too. So it's good to keep challenging their taste buds and expanding their repertoire of foods as they grow and develop.

Be persistent! It can take a child up to 10 (or even more) exposures to a new food before they will accept it!

Also, when parents are routinely eating a variety of foods, this is 'modelling' the healthy behaviours for the children. It is also showing them foods they may not be ready for yet but might try in the future.



Eat a Rainbow

How many colours did you eat today?



ADDING VARIETY

- Introduction

We are creatures of habit! It does not help that there are no seasons in the supermarket and that we can buy the same foods all year around

Food shopping tends to be more routine than enjoyable, which can mean flying around the same aisles and grabbing the same foods day in and day out.

Also, children have their favourite foods and to introduce something new can often be a challenge – therefore many of us end up relying on the same foods that we know they will eat.

The Western diet heavily relies on wheat and dairy. For example, count how many times wheat was on the menu today – breakfast, snacks, lunch, dinner – many will find that wheat featured quite heavily!

Reasons To Add Variety

In this ebook, we are promoting variety. We have already explained how this is beneficial for providing a host of nutrients. However, it can also help to prevent developing intolerances later in life.

Maintaining variety within a family can mean children will be more open to trying new foods on an ongoing basis and later in life. It is good to keep challenging their taste buds and expanding their repertoire of foods.

GRAINS

As mentioned, wheat flour is often a major ingredient in food products, meals and snacks. The problem is that the nutrient levels in refined white wheat flour are very low. But fortunately, there are many other grains that are far less processed and can provide a diversity of nutrients to support digestion and health generally.

Supermarkets now offer plenty of products based on other grains, as more people seek gluten-free products and other options.

If you or your child like wheat-based cereal, bread or toast in the morning, consider foods with rye, rice, oats, spelt or buckwheat later on in the day.

Bread

Instead of always relying on a regular sliced pan, why not try out genuine sourdough bread, rye bread, spelt bread or a wholesome brown soda bread instead, for a change?

Crackers

Children usually enjoy crackers for lunch or a snack, so try oatcakes, rye or spelt crackers, crispbreads made from buckwheat, rice or corn.

Pasta and Noodles

Pasta and noodles have become staples in many children's diets - they are cheap, cook quickly and are practical to serve with sauce, meat and veg. But as with bread, there is a wide variety in the quality of pasta and noodles available. Instead of relying on white pasta which can affect energy levels and can cause bloating, try brown pasta, brown spelt or brown rice pasta, buckwheat or corn pasta. Other pasta are now available such as black bean or red lentil pasta - don't be afraid to experiment!



SOUPS AND STEWS

Particularly in the winter, warming foods that are seasonal and easy to digest are more comforting for us. Invest in a wide-mouthed flask for your family in order to take leftover soups, stews and curries to work or school.

It is a great way to pack in a well-balanced nourishing meal. Include plenty of vegetables alongside a protein source such as chicken, beef, lamb, beans and/or lentils.

You can also add lots of warming spices rich in antioxidants, such as turmeric and ginger, to curries. These help to ignite the digestive fires and support healthy digestion.

Tip: You can go the extra mile by using a homemade bone broth as the base of the dish offering a wealth of health benefits such as gut healing and supporting healthy skin, bones and joints.



SALADS

If we are guided by what foods are available seasonally and listen to how our body reacts to different foods throughout the year, we can see mother nature in action!

For example, during the warmer spring and summer months we tend to enjoy salads and raw vegetables, just when these foods are in season. In winter, however, we might notice that we prefer warmer and more substantial foods.

So in the warmer months, enjoy a mix of colourful vegetables and salads, remembering to add a source of protein or fat, such as chicken pieces and olive oil, or puy lentils and sun-dried tomato pesto for longer-lasting energy levels. If you need something more filling you might include a tablespoon or two of brown rice or quinoa, a few oatcakes or a slice of wholemeal or sourdough bread.

Grain (Optional)	Protein / Fat	Vegetable/Fruit (diced or grated)
Wholemeal pasta (wheat, rice, buckwheat, lentil, etc.)	Salmon (smoked, fillet, tinned)	Beetroot, Carrot, Courgette, Red Pepper, Cucumber
Cous cous	Tuna, Chicken Pieces	Bean Sprouts, Broccoli Shoots
Quinoa	Bacon Lardons	Mixed Salad Leaves
Buckwheat groats	Feta, Mozzarella, Goats Cheese, diced cheddar	Apple, Mandarin
Millet	Anchovies, Pesto	Cherry Tomatoes
	Egg (boiled)	Sweet Corn, Olives
	Tinned Mixed Beans / Lentils	Fresh Herbs – Basil, Mint
	Falafel	
	Nuts/Seeds	



INSPIRATION FOR HEALTHY COMBINATIONS

- **Nicoise Salad** (tuna, boiled egg, anchovies, dressing made with oil, balsamic vinegar, mustard, salt, pepper, garlic)
- **Greek Salad** (mixed leaves, diced feta, tomato, olives)
- **Chicken Caesar Salad** (chicken, bacon lardons, romaine lettuce, parmesan and dressing made of oil, lemon juice, mustard and garlic)
- Lentils, blanched broccoli, bean sprouts, grated beetroot, grated carrot, grated apple.
- Salmon fillet or smoked salmon with cucumber and tomato.



SANDWICHES

If you want to cut down on bread you could make an open sandwich - one slice instead of two, with extra sandwich filler on the side.

Aim for a wholemeal bread such as sliced pan, rye, sourdough, soda, or spelt. Or try making homemade bread or porridge bread or other wholesome loaf type. You can slice it and keep it in the freezer.

Always include a protein or fat-rich food as a filling, such as meat, fish, egg, hummus or pesto, along with a vegetable or salad filler such as tomato, cucumber, lettuce or spinach.

Sandwich Ideas:

- Wholemeal bagel with peanut butter (if allowed, otherwise a seed butter, tahini) and banana, OR smoked salmon and cream cheese.
- Wholemeal sliced pan, roast chicken pieces, real mayonnaise, sliced tomato or cucumber.
- Wholemeal wrap, sliced roast turkey, hummus and cucumber - roll up and cut into pinwheels.
 - Alternatively, try wrapping in a lettuce leaf!
- Wholemeal pitta, with avocado, cheese, watercress and tomato, OR hummus, grated carrot and cucumber.

SMOOTHIES

Smoothies are fantastic if you need a breakfast, snack or lunch on the go.

You can make them the day before and grab them as you run out the door. There has been controversy as to whether smoothies are healthy or not.

One of the mistakes people often make with smoothies is adding too much fruit. This results in a quick sugar-release food leading to energy crashing shortly after. Therefore the key is to add just enough fruit to make it sweet enough to enjoy but to also add plenty of vegetables and some fat. This provides a more balanced and nourishing smoothie contributing to your daily target of 5-7 servings of vegetables daily.

Adding green vegetables such as spinach, colourful vegetables such as beetroot and fats such as seeds or avocado provide a host of nutrients to support your microbiome and gut health, liver and detoxification pathways, plus antioxidants for healthy immunity and skin.

We have included a table below to ensure a balanced combination:

1 cup of fruit	1-2 cups veg	1-2 portions of good fats/ protein
Berries	Broccoli	1-2 tbsp Seeds or Nuts
Banana	Kale*	1/4 Avocado
Pear	Spinach*	1 Tsp Coconut Oil
Apple	Cucumber	1/2 cup Full Fat or Greek Yoghurt
Orange	Courgette	Water/Coconut Water or Milk of choice (almond, rice, soy, oat, etc.)
Pineapple	*You may need 2-3 cups of fresh leafy veg	Add to desired consistency
Mango		



INSPIRATION FOR HEALTHY COMBINATIONS

- ½ banana, 1 juicy orange, a large handful of fresh or frozen spinach (or other leafy greens eg. kale), ½ cup cucumber, 1 tbsp flaxseeds, water (100ml / 1/3 glass).
- ½ pear, ½ cup of berries (fresh or frozen), 2 florets of broccoli, ½ cup courgette, ¼ avocado, 1 tsp of coconut oil, ½ cup oat milk.
- ½ cup Greek yoghurt, large handful of spinach, ¼ cup of blueberries, 2 tbsp of chia and/or flaxseed, 1 tbsp ground almonds, ½ cup almond milk.



THINKING OUTSIDE THE SANDWICH BOX

Dipper	Dip
Veggie Sticks (carrot, red pepper, cucumber, sugar snaps, celery, broccoli florets)	Cottage Cheese, Mashed Boiled Egg and Hummus
Mini Oatcakes, Rye Crackers	Flavoured Hummus, Tapenade, Pesto
Rice or Corn Cakes	Mashed avocado, Guacamole
Apple slices	Mackerel or Liver Pate
	Nut Butter

Egg Pies / Quiche

Fill muffin cases with a few peas and sweet corn, (tuna, optional), top up with whisked egg and pop in oven until cooked. You can also top with grated cheese towards the end of cooking. Keep in the fridge and add to lunch boxes, or use as a quick breakfast or snack throughout the week. Or use pastry to make mini quiches.

Skewers

For older children use skewers to make mini kebabs with cherry tomatoes, cubed cheese/mozzarella balls, folded roast meats or parma ham.

SNACKS

Dietary diversity is key to good health and longevity! Here are some ideas to add variety and colour to your everyday eating between meals.

Some ideas:

- Free-range egg, boiled
- Cherry tomatoes, cucumber
- Mini pancakes
- Mozzarella balls, mint and cherry tomato on skewers
- Yoghurt (natural) with organic berries or sliced fruit
- Oatcakes with nut or seed butter
- Olives
- Egg pies, omelette or quiche
- Cold chicken legs, cold meats
- Carrot sticks, celery sticks and /or red bell pepper sticks with hummus, peanut butter/tahini or cream cheese dip
- Corn on the cob
- Falafel with hummus or yoghurt
- Dark chocolate (70-85%)
- Grapes, clementines, pineapple/mango chunks, sliced pear/apple/kiwi
- Mixed organic berries (raspberries, blueberries)
- Sushi rolls
- Diced cheddar or feta cheese
- Parma ham wrapped around a stick of cucumber (secured with a toothpick)
- Roast beef wrapped around a finger of cheese
- Trail mix (if allowed at school) try sunflower and pumpkin seeds, dried cranberries and raisins
- Pretzels, popcorn
- Homemade nut and date balls
- Shop-bought bars; Nakd, Aldi Paleo Bars, Fulfill.



SNACKS

Meals and snacks usually have plenty of carbs, so remember to add healthy proteins and fats or oils when you make your own.

Also, use snacks as an opportunity to reach a good fruit and vegetable intake for the day.

Here are some combinations for inspiration:

1 cup of fruit	1-2 cups veg	1-2 portions of good fats/ protein
Wholewheat Bread (McCambridge is a good option)	Cheese	Fresh Fruit (eg. apple, banana, satsumas)
Sourdough Bread (e.g. Tartine Bakery)	Roast meat, Parma Ham	Dried Fruit (eg. raisins, apricots, figs, dates, mango, pineapple), tinned fruit in own juice (eg. pineapple)
Wholemeal Pitta Bread	Beans / Lentils (in soups, salads) Baked Beans, tinned	Veggie Crudités (sticks of carrot, celery, red/ yellow pepper, cucumber)
Oat Cakes (WF)	Eggs (boiled as snack, sliced)	Corn on the Cob, Cucumber
Rye Crackers (WF)	Egg Pies / Omelette / QuicheOlives	Cherry Tomatoes
Slice of Wholegrain Rye Bread (WF)	Mashed Avocado, Cottage cheese	Sugar Snaps
Slice Wholegrain Spelt Bread	Hummus	
Rice Cakes (GF)	Nut Butter (with no added vegetable oils)	
Corn Cakes (GF)	Seed Butter (sunflower, pumpkin, tahini)	
Buckwheat Crackers (GF)	Guacamole, Pesto, Tapenade	
	Yoghurt, full fat (natural with berries and nuts)	
	Coconut Oil (spread, in smoothie)	
	Mackerel or Liver Pate	

SUPERMARKET DASH!

There are going to be days where you are 'time poor' - you stay in bed a few minutes extra or didn't get to prepare lunch the day before.

Instead of finding a local sandwich deli or convenience store make a trip to the local supermarket. There are many healthier convenient lunch options you can choose from there.

Remember to include a wholegrain and wholemeal option, such as brown pitta bread, oat cakes, instant quinoa mix, a protein source (falafel, hummus, cheese, chicken pieces) and some veggies (salad, chopped carrot, rocket, spinach, tomatoes). Healthy fats such as pesto, avocado, or full-fat yoghurt make the meal more satisfying, supporting your energy levels for the rest of the afternoon.

You may also use this opportunity to grab a healthy snack for later (carrot sticks and hummus, oatcakes and almond butter, apple and mixed nuts).

Here are some quick and convenient options:

- Wholemeal pitta, tinned mackerel, hummus, salad/spinach.
- Ready chopped veg (carrot, celery, sugar snaps) with hummus/dip.
- Baked beans and brown soda bread (microwave/toaster at work?).
- Tinned mixed beans, a bag of salad, bean sprouts with hummus or a balsamic dressing to keep at work.
- Falafel, bag mixed leaves, yoghurt or hummus or tomato pesto.
- Soups (from the fridge section) with wholemeal bread, spelt/rye bread (if you have a microwave at work).
- Pre-prepared salad leaves/chopped veg with chicken legs from the hot deli counter, keep salad dressing at work if possible.
- Salad deli, avoid those with heavy salad dressings, go for broccoli, grated carrot, salad leaves, boiled egg, beans/lentils.
- Natural yoghurt with berries, chopped banana, add a small pack of nuts or seeds.
- Oatcakes with cream cheese, pesto or hummus and smoked salmon.
- Falafel with yoghurt or hummus and salad (warm in the microwave if possible).





PREPARATION

PREPARATION

Plan

Take 10 – 15 minutes each weekend to **PLAN FOR THE WEEK**. Keep a weekly diary or wall chart to jot down what you will make for lunches to ensure diversity and balance.

Make Extra

MAKE EXTRA at meal times, so you can **PORTION AND FREEZE**. This makes it easier to pull out a portion of soup, for example, the night before. Or chop some extra veggies at dinner time to put in a container with hummus as a snack the following day or make it into a salad.

Containers

Invest in practical lunchboxes or spill-proof **CONTAINERS: BENTO BOXES** (or use silicon cases to divide items) – this helps to avoid packaging. **WIDE NECK FLASK FOR SOUPS / CURRIES** e.g., Jane Stainless Steel Flood Flask, Thermos King Flood Flask. Use Kilner jars or empty jam jars for chia seed pudding or thick smoothies.

Fun For Kids

Make lunch more fun! Cut sandwiches into shapes using cookie cutters, **BE INVENTIVE** – there are lots of websites with creative ideas! Get the children involved – they can choose what fruit they would like or put a rainbow chart on the wall and encourage them to eat a different colour every day.

CALCIUM

All of us at different stages in our lives have differing nutritional demands: as children, in pregnancy, during times of stress, for example. While all minerals are important, calcium is one of the most abundant minerals in the body.

Children require adequate levels to ensure strong and healthy bones and teeth. One of the best sources of calcium comes from dairy, although more and more individuals for differing reasons are eliminating dairy from their diet.

Some find they get digestive discomfort from dairy produce while others follow a vegan diet. Potentially this could leave them at risk of being deficient in calcium, compromising the health of their bones and teeth.

Fortunately, many plant foods are useful sources of calcium. Encouraging someone who is dairy free to enjoy a variety of these foods on a daily basis is important.

Dairy Sources:

- Milk
- Butter
- Yoghurt
- Cheese



CALCIUM - NON DAIRY SOURCES

Leafy Greens

- Stuff broccoli florets with hummus.
- Add kale to a smoothie – make it the night before to grab & go.
- Stuff spinach in a wholemeal pitta bread or wrap with smoked salmon or chicken.

Almonds or Almond Butter

Almonds and almond butter are a really tasty and handy source of calcium. Almond butter is great on oatcakes or as a dip for apple slices or other fruit. Perfect for kids if nuts are allowed in school.

Tinned Salmon With Bones

The soft bones in tinned salmon are a wonderful source of calcium, easy to mash into a spread.

Mix tinned salmon with yoghurt and stuff into a pitta with some spinach leaves. Salmon goes well in a stir fry along with wholegrain pasta and veg. For lunch boxes, it can supplement a salad with lettuce, cherry tomatoes and cucumber.

Sesame Seeds

Some schools allow sesame seeds – use hummus on your child’s sandwich or serve it as a dip with some wholegrain crackers or raw veg. Tahini can also be used on oatcakes or crackers.

Add sesame seeds (whole or milled) to yoghurt.

Seaweed

Seaweeds contain calcium and a host of trace minerals

- Homemade sushi – use squares of nori to wrap brown rice and smoked salmon or tuna.
- Use kelp flakes to help season soups or spaghetti Bolognese.
- Tip: If you add kombu/kelp when soaking or cooking dried beans it helps to remove the ‘windy’ factor!

Tofu or Tempeh

Tofu and tempeh are made from soybeans, which are a good source of calcium. These traditional and very healthy products have been used for thousands of years in the East. They are virtually tasteless but they absorb flavours well. Try marinating them in soy sauce or some balsamic dressing and add to stir-fries or salads.

Plant-based milk substitutes such as soybeans, almonds or oat are mostly fortified with calcium and can be used in porridge, smoothies, healthy hot chocolates or dairy-free white sauces, for example.



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