

## What's for lunch?

By OSCAR Care Group Dietitian, Stacey Deayton

Children need a variety of foods every day to be healthy. However, the challenge often lies in the nature of children's eating and their appetites varying greatly from day to day.

Providing a healthy lunch can be the cause of stress for many parents & carers.

This simple guide prepared by Nutrition Australia can assist with preparing a healthy lunch.

**FOR A HEALTHY LUNCHBOX**

# PICK & MIX

**SOMETHING FROM EACH GROUP 1-6!**

A clear plastic lunchbox is shown, filled with various healthy food items. The lunchbox is divided into sections. On the left, there is a compartment with sliced bananas and a small container of white yogurt. In the center, there is a compartment with a sandwich made of whole-grain bread, filled with lettuce, tomato, and a protein source. To the right of the sandwich is a white water bottle. On the far right, there is a compartment with a variety of vegetables, including sliced cucumbers, cherry tomatoes, and a whole ear of corn. Below the vegetables, there is a small green bowl containing a hard-boiled egg. Each food item is labeled with a number in a colored circle, corresponding to the food groups. The labels are: 1. FRUIT (green), 2. VEGETABLES (green), 3. MILK, YOGHURT AND CHEESE (teal), 4. MEAT OR MEAT ALTERNATIVE (pink), 5. GRAIN AND CEREAL FOOD (purple), and 6. WATER (blue).

1 **FRUIT**

2 **VEGETABLES**

3 **MILK, YOGHURT AND CHEESE**

4 **MEAT OR MEAT ALTERNATIVE**

5 **GRAIN AND CEREAL FOOD**

6 **WATER**

Developed in conjunction with the Achievement Program to support a whole-school approach to healthy eating.


**Nutrition Australia**



**VICTORIA**  
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Here are some extra tips:

- Try to give children some choice about what they take for lunch (for example, "would you like a banana or an apple in your lunchbox today"?)
- Try to get them involved in preparing their lunchbox, if possible.
- If children are leaving most or part of their lunch, try to find out why (eg are they not getting enough time to eat, packaging is too difficult to open etc).

It's important to note that it is normal for children to eat more on some days, and less on others. If a child is being offered regular, healthy foods and can sit down and eat in a relaxed manner, they can usually regulate their own appetite. The key is for parents or carers to remain matter-of-fact about foods. Children are very good at sensing any additional (well meaning) pressure to accept or eat new foods, but this can often lead to increased resistance.

**FOR A HEALTHY LUNCHBOX**

**SOMETHING FROM EACH GROUP 1-6!**

FRUIT 1	VEGETABLES 2	MILK, YOGHURT AND CHEESE 3	MEAT OR MEAT ALTERNATIVE 4	GRAIN AND CEREAL FOOD 5	WATER 6
<b>FRESH FRUIT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apple</li> <li>• Banana</li> <li>• Mandarin</li> <li>• Orange quarters</li> <li>• Passionfruit halves (with spoon)</li> <li>• Watermelon, honeydew, rockmelon chunks</li> <li>• Pineapple chunks</li> <li>• Grapes</li> <li>• Plums</li> <li>• Nectarines, peaches, Apricots</li> <li>• Strawberries</li> <li>• Cherries</li> <li>• Kiwifruit halves (with spoon)</li> <li>• Pear</li> </ul> <b>MIXED FRUIT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruit salad</li> <li>• Fruit kebabs</li> </ul> <b>DRIED FRUIT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dried fruit, nut, popcorn mixes*</li> </ul> <b>TINNED FRUIT/SNACK PACKS/CUPS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In natural juice (not syrup)</li> </ul> 	<b>FRESH CRUNCHY VEGIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corn cobs</li> <li>• Carrot sticks</li> <li>• Capsicum sticks</li> <li>• Green beans</li> <li>• Cucumber sticks</li> <li>• Celery sticks</li> <li>• Snow peas</li> <li>• Tomatoes (e.g. cherry and Roma tomatoes)</li> <li>• Mushroom pieces</li> </ul> <b>Can serve with either:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hummus</li> <li>• Tomato salsa</li> <li>• Tatziki</li> <li>• Beetroot dip</li> <li>• Natural yoghurt</li> </ul> <b>SALADS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coleslaw and potato salad (reduced fat dressing)</li> <li>• Mexican bean, tomato, lettuce and cheese salad</li> <li>• Pesto pasta salad*</li> </ul> <b>BAKED ITEMS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grilled or roasted vegetables</li> <li>• Wholemeal vegetable muffins or scones</li> <li>• Vegetable slice (with grated zucchini and carrot)</li> <li>• Popcorn</li> </ul> <b>SOUP</b> (in small thermos) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pumpkin soup</li> <li>• Potato and leak soup</li> <li>• Chicken and corn soup</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milk</li> <li>• Calcium-enriched soy and other plant-based milks</li> <li>• Yoghurt (frozen overnight)</li> <li>• Custard</li> </ul> <b>Tip:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freeze the night before to keep cool during the day</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheese cubes, sticks or slices</li> <li>• Cottage or ricotta cheese</li> <li>• Cream cheese</li> <li>• Tatziki dip</li> </ul> <b>Can serve with either:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruit</li> <li>• Wholegrain cereal, low in sugar</li> <li>• Vegetable sticks</li> <li>• Rice and corn cakes</li> <li>• Wholegrain wheat crackers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tinned tuna or salmon in springwater</li> <li>• Lean roast or grilled meats (e.g. beef, chicken, kangaroo)</li> <li>• Falafel balls</li> <li>• Lean meat or chicken patties</li> <li>• Tinned tuna or salmon patties</li> <li>• Lentil patties</li> <li>• Lean deli meats (e.g. ham, silver-side, chicken)</li> <li>• Boiled eggs</li> <li>• Baked beans (canned)</li> <li>• Tofu cubes</li> <li>• Hummus dip</li> <li>• Lean meat or chicken kebab sticks</li> <li>• Peanut butter*</li> </ul> <b>Can serve with:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wholegrain sandwich, roll, pita or wrap bread with salad</li> <li>• Rice and corn cakes</li> <li>• Wholegrain wheat crackers</li> <li>• Side salad</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegetable fritтата</li> <li>• Skinless chicken drumsticks</li> <li>• Savoury muffins or scones (e.g. lean ham, cheese and shallots)</li> <li>• Homemade pizzas with lean roast or deli meats and vegetables</li> </ul> <b>Can serve with:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Side salad</li> <li>• Steamed or roasted vegetables</li> </ul>	<b>MAINS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wraps</li> <li>• Sandwiches</li> <li>• Rolls</li> <li>• Toasted sandwiches</li> </ul> <b>Tip:</b> Use breads such as wholemeal, multigrain, rye, sourdough, pita, flat, corn, mountain, lavash, white fibre-enriched, soy and linseed, herb, naan, bagels, foccacias, fruit bread and English muffins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pasta dishes</li> <li>• Rice, quinoa or cous cous dishes</li> <li>• Noodle dishes</li> <li>• Sushi</li> </ul> <b>SAVORY BAKED ITEMS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Homemade pizzas</li> <li>- Wholemeal savoury muffins or scones (e.g. ham, cheese and corn muffins)</li> <li>- Vegetable based muffins</li> <li>- Pasta or noodle bake</li> </ul> <b>SWEET BAKED ITEMS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruit loaf</li> <li>• Wholemeal fruit based muffins</li> </ul> <b>SNACKS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High fibre, low sugar cereal (e.g. muesli)</li> <li>• English muffins</li> <li>• Crackers</li> <li>• Crisps/spreads</li> <li>• Rice cakes</li> <li>• Corn thins</li> <li>• Wholemeal scones</li> <li>• Pikelets</li> <li>• Crumpets</li> <li>• Hot cross buns (no icing)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a water bottle (for refilling throughout the day)</li> </ul> <b>Tip:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freeze overnight to keep foods cool in lunchboxes</li> </ul> <p>Sweet and savoury snack foods (e.g. muesli/fruit/nut bars, biscuits, crisps, cakes, muffins, slices) should be <u>limited</u> in lunchboxes. They can lead to excess energy intake if consumed in large amounts.</p> <p>Sugar sweetened drinks and confectionery should not be provided in lunchboxes. They can lead to excess energy intake and tooth decay.</p> 

For more information about healthy eating and for many tasty recipes, visit the the Healthy Eating Advisory Service:  
<http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/>