

Top tips for a healthier lunchbox

Making Sandwiches

- To avoid soggy sandwiches, make sure that you dry the salad with kitchen paper or a salad spinner. Alternatively, cut up some cucumber and add to cherry tomatoes in a separate sandwich bag.
- If your child refuses to eat brown bread at first, try buying 'whole white' sliced bread (white bread made with one-third wholemeal flour). Or you could make a sandwich from one slice of whole white bread and one slice of wholemeal/brown bread.
- Always keep a selection of breads in the freezer for sandwiches. Today there are many different types of bread that you can introduce your child to and by using a different type of bread each day make their lunchbox more interesting. Try granary, wholemeal and raisin breads; multi-grain and seed rolls; mini wholemeal baguettes and bagels and wholemeal pittas.
- Breads and rolls kept in the freezer will remain fresh. You can take out the frozen bread in the morning to make a sandwich. They defrost in about half an hour on a plate.
- Cut down on the amount of butter or margarine you use and try to avoid mayonnaise.
- Cut down on crisps, which are high in fat, and choose plain popcorn, breadsticks or dried mixed fruit (without added sugar) instead.
- Pick low-fat sandwich fillings, such as lean meats, including ham or turkey, fish (such as tuna or salmon), cottage cheese, Edam, mozzarella, or sliced banana. Always try to add a little salad to the sandwich/roll.

[Back to top](#)

Alternatives

- In the summer, salads are light and refreshing and full of essential vitamins and minerals. Try sprinkling an assortment of seeds over the salad (sunflower, pumpkin, sesame and pine nuts) or dried fruit such as sultanas, raisins or chopped apricots.
- Cook some brown rice salad with lentils, and chop up aubergine,

peppers, spring onions and some turkey or chicken to add. Pasta salads are also a good option, such as pasta with tuna and avocado, or pasta with chicken, sweetcorn, cherry tomato and spinach leaves.

- Other options include adding a slice of home-made Spanish omelette with potato, courgette and tomato, or making a broccoli and tomato quiche. This could be made for an evening meal and a slice saved for lunchboxes the next day.
- Home-made pizza is also a favourite with children. Why not make a pizza together for an evening meal and save some for the next day's lunchbox? Add a tomato and basil sauce/paste, mozzarella cheese and plenty of chopped vegetables – peppers, onion, mushrooms and sliced courgettes. You could also make a mini pizza with a wholemeal muffin cut in half and topped with vegetables or ham. Toast this under a grill for a couple of minutes for a fun and different snack.
- Don't forget to add some vegetables to your child's lunchbox, such as cherry tomatoes, or sticks of carrot, cucumber, celery and peppers. Sugar snap peas are also a good choice because they are naturally sweet.

[Back to top](#)



- Include at least a portion of fruit or veg in your child's lunchbox as this will set them on their way to the recommended 5 portions a day. You could make an exotic fresh fruit salad with blueberries, raspberries, strawberries and grapes or a more traditional version with apples, bananas, grapes and oranges.
- Try adding a handful of dried fruit such as raisins, apricots, figs or prunes for vitamins and also to encourage your child to try new foods.
- Try different desserts, such as stewed fruit. You can add a spoonful or two of natural yoghurt, or you could sprinkle some rolled oats, nuts and seeds on the top for extra crunch and vitamins and minerals.
- Cut down on crisps, which are high in fat, and choose plain popcorn, or dried mixed fruit (without added sugar) instead. If your child finds it difficult to cut out crisps buy low-fat versions, crisps that you can add your own salt to or vegetable crisps.
- Replace cakes, chocolates and biscuits with scones, currant buns and fruit bread.
- Make sure that your child gets enough calcium by adding a slice of low-fat cheese, a low-fat yoghurt (preferably free of sugar) or low-fat rice pudding.

[Back to top](#)



- Always make sure that your child is given a drink to go to school with as this will keep them hydrated and will help them to concentrate.
- Rather than drinks that are very high in sugar, such as fizzy drinks or 'juice drinks', go for unsweetened fruit juice or water.
- Add a fruit smoothie made from natural yoghurt, mixed berries and maybe a dash of honey, or maybe a home-made flavoured milk shake.

[Back to top](#)



Reducing salt

- Always check food labels for the salt or sodium content. If sodium is listed and you want to convert this to salt, you multiply the sodium figure by 2.5.
- A product high in salt is one that has anything above 1.25g of salt per 100g or 0.5g of sodium per 100g. A product low in salt is one that has 0.25g or less of salt per 100g or 0.1g or less of sodium.
- Cut down on salty snacks, such as crisps and nuts, and heavily salted foods such as ready meals, bacon, cheese, and smoked fish.
- If you make your own foods (pasta, quiche, and bread) for your child's lunchbox cut down on the salt or do not add any.
- Buy low salt options wherever possible and if you are unsure whether something is high in salt, maybe put in some fruit or chopped veg instead.
- When making sandwiches, go easy with sauces and pickles because these are usually very high in salt.

Reducing fat

- Always check the food label for fat content. As a guide, 20g or more of fat per 100g is a lot; 3g or less per 100g is considered low in fat. In

terms of saturated fat, 5g or more per 100g is considered a lot and 1g or less per 100g is considered low in saturated fat.

- Use butter, margarine, mayonnaise or salad dressings sparingly.
- Try to eat crisps sparingly and buy low fat crisps where possible.
- Use high fat cheese or cheese spreads sparingly.
- Cut down on cakes, chocolate biscuits, chocolate and confectionery.
- Limit eating meat pies, pasties, fried foods and salami.
- Avoid fatty cuts of meat or chicken with skin.

Reducing sugar

- Always read the label of any food you are buying for your child's lunchbox, whether snacks and biscuits or cakes (or dressings on ready-made salads).
- A product with a lot of sugar is one that has 10g or more of sugar per 100g. A product low in sugar contains 2g or less per 100g.
- Always check the ingredient list on food labels. Watch out for other words used to describe sugar such as sucrose, glucose (syrup), fructose, hydrolysed starch and invert sugar. The higher up the ingredients list they come, the higher in sugar the foods are.
- Avoid drinks that are very high in sugar, such as fizzy drinks or juice drinks. Instead, choose unsweetened fruit juice, water, milk, smoothies or yoghurt drinks.
- Replace cakes, biscuits and chocolate bars with scones, currant buns and fruit bread.
- Instead of sweets and chocolate, give your child fresh or dried fruit to snack on. Alternatively, you could try sunflower and pumpkin seeds or chopped up vegetables, cherry tomatoes or peppers.
- If your child insists on having sweets or chocolate, try to limit this to one day a week and never reward children with sweets.
- If you bake at home for your child's lunchbox, cut down on the sugar that you add. Try adding fresh strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, apricots or fruit purées.



To help you pack a healthy balanced lunch for your child, a whole month of lunchbox ideas have been carefully put together to make sure they balance over the week for energy, total fat, saturated fat, carbohydrate, protein, salt and sugar.

The table below gives the nutritional guidelines per lunch for 9 to 12 year

olds.

[Week 1](#) | [Week 2](#) | [Week 3](#) | [Week 4](#)

NUTRITIONAL GUIDELINES PER LUNCH FOR 9 TO 12 YEAR OLDS

Energy 585kcal, Fat 23.7g, Saturates 7.5g, Protein 8.5g minimum, Carbohydrate 81.3g, Sodium 722mg, Salt 1.8g, Sugars (total) n/a*



MONDAY

- Small portion of tuna (in brine) and sweetcorn salad
- currant bun
- apple
- Bottle flavoured milk

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
Energy 542kcal	Protein 25.9g
Fat 18g	Saturates 2.1g
Carbohydrate 73.6g	Sugars 42.2g
Sodium 822mg	Salt 2.1g

TUESDAY

- 3 mini pitta bread filled with chicken salad and low-fat mayonnaise
- Pack of 3 small chocolate coated sponge cakes
- 1 satsuma
- Bottle flavoured water

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
Energy 600kcal	Protein 41g
Fat 16.5g	Saturates 0.8g
Carbohydrate 76.5g	Sugars 29.5g
Sodium 808mg	Salt 2g

WEDNESDAY

- Small slice of deep pan pizza with ham and pineapple
- 1 pot low-fat yoghurt

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
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- 4 cherry tomatoes
- 1 pear
- Bottle fizzy water

Energy 528kcal	Protein 25g
Fat 19.6g	Saturates 8.5g
Carbohydrate 67.3g	Sugars 32.8g
Sodium 1216mg	Salt 3g

THURSDAY

- 1 bagel with 2 cheese triangles and a sliced tomato
- 1 mini can fruit pieces in juice
- Mini bag of carrots or 6 small sticks of carrot
- Carton unsweetened orange juice

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
Energy 430kcal	Protein 14.6g
Fat 8.9g	Saturates 4.5g
Carbohydrate 77.7g	Sugars 34.2g
Sodium 849mg	Salt 2.1g

FRIDAY

- Peanut butter bagel
- 1 cereal bar
- 1 peach
- Yoghurt drink

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
Energy 645kcal	Protein 23.4g
Fat 19.9g	Saturates 4.2g
Carbohydrate 99g	Sugars 43.8g
Sodium 688mg	Salt 1.7g

AVERAGE WEEKLY NUTRITION INFORMATION
Energy 549kcal, Fat 16.6g, Saturates 4g, Carbohydrate 78.8g, Sugars 36.5g, Protein 26g, Sodium 877mg, Salt 2.2g



MONDAY

- 3 crackers with low-fat cheese
- 1 flapjack
- 4 cherry tomatoes
- 1 mini can fruit pieces in juice
- Bottle of flavoured water

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
Energy 483kcal	Protein 17.8g
Fat 23g	Saturates 7.6g
Carbohydrate 54.6g	Sugars 27.8g
Sodium 547mg	Salt 1.1g

TUESDAY

- Thinly sliced ham with pickle in a soft brown roll
- 1 small tub/pack of mixed dried fruit and nuts
- 1 banana
- Carton of unsweetened fruit juice

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
Energy 573kcal	Protein 20.1g
Fat 21.6g	Saturates 4.4g
Carbohydrate 79.2g	Sugars 52.3g
Sodium 952mg	Salt 2.4g

WEDNESDAY

- Mixed veg and rice salad
- 1 packet of reduced fat crisps
- 1 chocolate muffin
- Bottle chocolate flavoured milk

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
Energy 821kcal	Protein 23.7g
Fat 29.1g	Saturates 6.9g
Carbohydrate 123.7g	Sugars 33.8g
Sodium 1047mg	Salt 2.6g

THURSDAY

- Small piece of quiche and low-fat coleslaw
- Low-fat fruit fromage frais
- A handful of grapes
- Bottle of flavoured fizzy water

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
Energy	Protein

472kcal	20.6g
Fat 28.9g	Saturates 12g
Carbohydrate 34.9g	Sugars 18.2g
Sodium 843mg	Salt 2.1g

FRIDAY

- Cheese and salad sandwich on wholemeal bread
- 1 cereal bar
- 1 medium tomato
- 1 plum
- Carton unsweetened apple juice

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
Energy 614kcal	Protein 25g
Fat 24.3g	Saturates 7.5g
Carbohydrate 78.7g	Sugars 38.9g
Sodium 819mg	Salt 2g

AVERAGE WEEKLY NUTRITION INFORMATION

Energy 592.6kcal, Fat 25.4g, Saturates 7.7g, Carbohydrate 74.2g, Sugars 34.2g, Protein 21.4g, Sodium 842mg, Salt 2g



MONDAY

- Tuna (canned in oil) and cucumber on white crusty bread
- 2 semi-sweet biscuits
- 1 small pack currants
- Bottle of flavoured water

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
Energy 645kcal	Protein 27.1g
Fat 18.5g	Saturates 4.3g
Carbohydrate 98.7g	Sugars 27.1g
Sodium 974mg	Salt 2.4g

TUESDAY

- Low-fat sausage sandwich on white crusty bread with tomato ketchup and onion
- Low-fat yoghurt with crunchy pieces

NUTRITION INFORMATION

- 1 peach
- Carton unsweetened fruit juice

Energy 529kcal	Protein 19.3g
Fat 9.1g	Saturates 1.5g
Carbohydrate 99g	Sugars 64.5g
Sodium 995mg	Salt 2.5g

WEDNESDAY

- Wholemeal bread sandwich filled with thinly sliced ham and tomato
- 1 small bag of plain popcorn
- 1 banana
- Chocolate/strawberry flavoured low-fat milkshake

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
Energy 633kcal	Protein 21.8g
Fat 25.4g	Saturates 3.6g
Carbohydrate 84.7g	Sugars 42.3g
Sodium 969mg	Salt 2.4g

THURSDAY

- Thinly sliced chicken with salad on a soft wholemeal roll
- 1 packet of reduced fat crisps
- 1 apple
- Bottle of fruit smoothie

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
Energy 575kcal	Protein 19.3g
Fat 17.7g	Saturates 5g
Carbohydrate 90.4g	Sugars 51.8g
Sodium 792mg	Salt 2g

FRIDAY

- Peanut butter sandwich on wholemeal bread
- 1 packet of reduced fat crisps
- A handful of grapes
- Carton of unsweetened fruit juice

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
Energy 543kcal	Protein 14.6g
Fat 19.3g	Saturates 5.5g

Carbohydrate 82.7g	Sugars 34.3g
Sodium 711mg	Salt 1.8g

AVERAGE WEEKLY NUTRITION INFORMATION
Energy 585kcal, Fat 18g, Saturates 4g, Carbohydrate 91.1g, Protein 20.4g, Sodium 888mg, Salt 2.2g, Sugars (total) 44g



MONDAY

- Wholemeal bread sandwich with cheese and salad
- 1 cereal bar
- Mini bag of carrots or 6 small sticks of carrot
- Carton unsweetened orange juice

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
Energy 614kcal	Protein 25g
Fat 24.3g	Saturates 7.5g
Carbohydrate 78.7g	Sugars 38.9g
Sodium 819mg	Salt 2g

TUESDAY

- Boiled egg and salad on a wholemeal roll
- Low-fat yoghurt
- 1 mini can mixed fruit pieces in juice
- Bottle of water

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
Energy 493kcal	Protein 17.4g
Fat 22.1g	Saturates 4.3g
Carbohydrate 60.3g	Sugars 37g
Sodium 819mg	Salt 2g

WEDNESDAY

- Chapatti filled with chicken tandoori and salad
- 1 small tub/pack of unsalted nuts and currants
- 1 mini can peach pieces in juice

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
Energy	Protein

- Bottle of fizzy flavoured water

596kcal	20.4g
Fat 24g	Saturates 3.7g
Carbohydrate 79.4g	Sugars 37.7g
Sodium 682mg	Salt 1.7g

THURSDAY

- Tinned salmon (in brine) with salad on wholemeal bread sandwich
- 1 small bag of plain popcorn
- 4 cherry tomatoes
- 1 pear
- Carton unsweetened fruit juice

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
Energy 575kcal	Protein 19.3g
Fat 17.7g	Saturates 5g
Carbohydrate 90.4g	Sugars 51.8g
Sodium 792mg	Salt 2g

FRIDAY

- Thinly sliced turkey with cranberry sauce on a soft wholemeal roll
- 1 packet of reduced fat crisps
- 1 banana
- Yoghurt drink

NUTRITION INFORMATION	
Energy 492kcal	Protein 23.5g
Fat 22.2g	Saturates 5.7g
Carbohydrate 53.1g	Sugars 23.9g
Sodium 440mg	Salt 1.1g

AVERAGE WEEKLY NUTRITION INFORMATION
Energy 554kcal, Fat 22.1g, Saturates 5.2g, Carbohydrate 72.4g, Protein 21.1g, Sodium 710mg, Salt 1.8g, Sugars (total) 37.9g

*You will see that no recommendation is given for sugars in the nutritional guidelines table. This is because there are two types – natural sugars and added sugars – and it is difficult to separate them. The figures given in the nutrition information tables are for total sugars (natural and added sugars).