Food for thought!

Too much or too little? Are you packing your child off with the ‘right stuff’? We hope these hints and helpful guides will give parents and carers a little more information about what every child needs to fuel their day the right way!

***What to include in lunch boxes:***

**Fruits and vegetables**

**How much?** At least 1 fruit and 1 vegetable in each lunchbox

**Examples:** Fresh fruit, tinned fruits (in juice not syrup), dried fruits, salad items & vegetables. You could include vegetable crudites for dipping or add veggies to salads, pasta or rice dishes

**Why?** Fruit and vegetables are a good source of vitamins, minerals, fibre and anti-oxidants

**Tips:** Aim for a variety of colours. Not only will it make the lunchbox look more appetising but it also provides a variety of different vitamins and minerals.

**Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy foods**   
**How much?** Include at least 1 portion       
**Examples;** Sandwiches, pitta bread, wraps, pasta salad, potato salad, sweet potato wedges, rice dishes, cous cous, bread sticks, crackers, oat cakes, rice cakes                   
**Why?** These foods will provide energy, fuel for vital tissues and organs including the brain, fibre, B vitamins and other minerals.      
**Tips:** Try to include some wholegrain varieties from this food group each week such as brown, wholemeal, granary or 50/50 bread, wholewheat pasta or brown rice.

**Dairy and alternatives  
How much?** Include at least 1 portion       
**Examples:** Carton of milk, cheese, yoghurts, custard, rice pudding, milk or yoghurt based smoothies, soya, oat and nut based milks                 
**Why?** These foods provide calcium, B vitamins and protein              
**Tips:** If your child is over 2yrs and growing well opt for semi-skimmed milk and low fat yoghurts and cheeses.

**Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins  
How much?** Include at least 1 portion in every lunchbox                    
**Examples:** Chicken, turkey, pork, beef, lamb, beans, fish, shellfish, lentils, chickpeas, pulses, soya products such as tofu, quorn, hummus  
**Why?** These foods provide protein, iron and zinc.  
**Tips:** Try to include at least one portion of fish each week. Oily fish such as fresh, tinned or frozen salmon, sardines, pilchards, mackerel, herring, and fresh tuna may be beneficial for children’s cognitive development. Try a salmon or mackerel pate as a dip or sandwich filler.

**Drinks  
How much?** Include a healthy drink daily  
**Examples:** Milk and water are the only tooth friendly drinks for children and are the best options for your child’s lunchbox.  
**Tip:** There’s no need to spend money on exotic or colourful looking drinks. Tap water is free and one of the healthiest drinks you can offer your child.  Fill a reusable bottle with fresh tap water.

[***https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes***](https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes)

***This website has heaps of links to some recipes for fantastic lunch box ideas if you are finding that you are stuck with the same old ideas week in week out!***

[***https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/healthy-lunches-for-kids***](https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/healthy-lunches-for-kids)

***This website includes helpful hints for picky eaters and great information about ‘quantities’ and how much food a child really needs!***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Guideline Daily Amounts for children aged 5-10** | |
| Energy | 1,800kcal |
| Protein | 24g |
| Carbohydrates | 220g |
| Sugar | 85g |
| Fat | 70g |
| Saturates | 20g |
| Fibre | 15g |
| Salt | 4g |