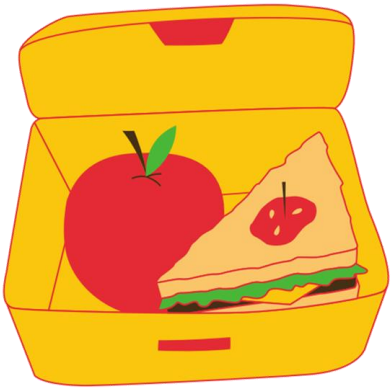
eat smart SHEFFIELD





PACKED LUNCH GUIDANCE

FOR PARENTS & CARERS

SHEFFIELD'S SWEET ENOUGH

Learn Sheffield

FOOD ACT!VE

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Introduction

Schools are an influential setting and can contribute significantly to improving the health and wellbeing of our children.

Eating behaviours and habits are formed in early life and good nutrition in childhood can help to prevent a variety of health problems, both in the short term and later in life.

There is increasing concern that many children are consuming too much fat, sugar and salt and too little fibre, fruit and vegetables.

School meals which are provided by the school must adhere to the Government School Food Standards which have been in place since 2015. These standards ensure that children are offered healthy, nutritious meals. They state, for example, that:

- One or more portions of vegetables are to be on the menu every day
- There is an emphasis on wholegrain foods in place of refined carbohydrates *(e.g. brown bread instead of white)*
- No more than 2 portions of pastry products are to be served each week
- One or more portions of fruit are to be on the menu every day
- Drinking water is made available

Unfortunately, there are no such standards for packed lunches brought in from home and a recent survey found that only 1 in 100 packed lunches would meet the School Food Standards. Worryingly, 82% contained unhealthy snacks such as chocolate or sweets, 61% contained sugar sweetened drinks such as fizzy pop or milkshakes, and 60% contained savoury snacks high in fat and salt, such as crisps.

Packed lunches can contribute to almost a third of a child's weekly food intake, therefore we want to encourage healthy packed lunches for those children who bring them into school.

As such, this guidance has been designed to help you to provide a healthy and nutritious packed lunch for your child to help give them the best chance possible.

Benefits of a Healthy Packed Lunch

✓ It will help your child to consume a healthier diet & encourage life-long good eating habits

✓ They will have better levels of concentration & energy throughout the day

✓ It will support your child to have better oral health & to maintain a healthy weight

✓ A healthy packed lunch can be a great opportunity to contribute to your child's 5-a-day

✓ You know exactly what is included in their lunch so can see what is eaten, as well as control portion sizes

✓ It can reduce food waste – *eg. leftovers from home can be used to make a healthy lunch*

✓ If children come to school with a healthy, varied lunchbox it can help to encourage others to try new foods (great if your child is a little picky!)






Things to Include in a Packed Lunch

Packed lunches do not have to be boring or bland!

With a little thought and imagination, they can be healthy, tasty and fun too!

Try to base the contents around the main food groups detailed in the Eatwell Guide displayed below..



Public Health England (2020) The Eatwell Guide. Crown Copyright

Make sure your packed lunch contains:

1) **A portion of bread (or similar), rice, potatoes or pasta**
2) **Plenty of fruit and vegetables**
3) **A portion of dairy or a calcium rich alternative**
4) **Some protein in the form of beans, pulses, fish, egg, meat**
5) **A healthy drink**

1) **Bread, Rice, Potatoes, Pasta:** These starchy foods are a healthy source of **energy**. Good choices include rolls, bread, wraps, chapatti, pitta bread, pasta or rice salad. **Wholemeal** varieties are good options as they contain more **fibre** than white varieties.

2) **Fruit & Vegetables:** Fruit and vegetables provide **vitamins**, **minerals** and **fibre**. Eating these foods keep children **healthy** and **reduces the risk of disease** in later life. Lunches should include at least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables.

3) **Dairy & Alternatives:** These foods provide **calcium** for **healthy bones and teeth**. Include one portion at lunch, for example a drink of semi-skimmed or skimmed milk or unsweetened (fortified) soya milk, an individual cheese portion or pot of plain or low sugar yoghurt, or dairy free alternative.

4) **Beans, Pulses, Fish, Eggs, Meat:** These foods provide **protein for growth**. Packed lunches should include one portion of these foods each day. Suggestions include boiled egg, ham, chicken, soya, Quorn, tuna, mackerel, salmon, hummus, chickpeas, lentils or beans.

5) **Drinks:** It is important to **stay hydrated**. The best drinks options are always plain water or milk (semi-skimmed, skimmed or unsweetened (fortified) alternative). Try to avoid fruit juices and fizzy drinks – if necessary, switch to no-added sugar cordial instead or add a slice of orange or lime to add flavour to plain water.

What About Treats?

treat
noun
'an event or item that is out of the ordinary and gives great pleasure'

It is fine to add an extra treat on occasion – maybe once a week. Given too often and it won't be seen as 'special'. And you should still try to make sure it is a healthier choice.

Some good options include:

✓ A slice of malt loaf or banana bread, a teacake or low sugar flapjack / cereal bar, rice pudding pot or sugar-free jelly

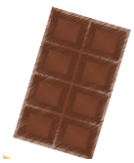
✓ Unsalted pretzels, plain popcorn, seeds, rice or corn cakes with cream cheese, crackers & cheese, vegetable or bread sticks with a dip

And remember, treats don't have to be food – why not add a little note, sticker or joke in the lunchbox to make your little one smile instead?

Things to Avoid in a Packed Lunch

You should try to avoid including foods and drinks that are high in fat, sugar and/or salt as these are bad for our health.

It is advised against including any of these types of items:



Confectionery, such as chocolate bars & sweets

Meat and pastry products, such as sausage rolls or pies





Savoury snacks, such as crisps or processed meat snacks *(e.g. Pepperami)*



Chocolate coated biscuits or wafers



Cakes, bakes, buns or slices



Fizzy drinks or any other sugar sweetened drinks including milkshakes

Nut or nut products are not allowed in schools because of the danger they present to children with allergies.

Let's Talk About Sugar...

We all know that eating too much sugar is bad for us - it can contribute to us having too many calories, which can lead to weight gain. Being overweight increases our risk of health problems such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

Sugar is also bad for our oral health and can cause tooth decay. This not only makes teeth look bad but can also be extremely painful. If not dealt with, rotten teeth may need to be extracted which can lead to further heath issues.

In addition, too much sugar can have more immediate effects on our behaviour and concentration levels.

BUT – how much is too much?

It is not always easy to know how much sugar we should have or how much there is in the food and drinks we consume.

Here are the recommended daily limits of free sugar* for the different age groups – remember, this is not a target to aim for but the maximum amount of sugar we should consume in one day (the less sugar, the better!):

Age	Daily Sugar Limit	
	In Teaspoons	*In Grams*
0-3 Years Old	0	0g
4-6 Years Old	4.5	19g
7-11 Years Old	5.5	24g
11+ Years Old	7	30g

Natural sugars found in milk, fruit and vegetables do not count towards this limit.

**Free sugar' is any sugar added or released during the production of a food or drink – we need to cut down on this type of sugar. Sugar found naturally in fruit, vegetables & milk does not count as 'free sugar'.*

Top Tips for Low Sugar Lunch Boxes

Here are our top tips for keeping sugar to a minimum:

- ✓ **Stick to low sugar sandwich fillings** – avoid anything sweet like jam, marmalade or chocolate spread.
- ✓ **Ditch the fizzy drinks , juice boxes & milkshakes** – these have surprisingly high amounts of sugar. For example, a Frijj Fudge Brownie Milkshake has 13.5 tsps. (54g) of sugar!
- ✓ **Limit pre-packaged, processed foods** – not only are these expensive and bad for the environment (often using single-use plastic), they can contain high levels of sugar.
- ✓ **Watch the yoghurts** – some contain lots of sugar, especially the split pot varieties. Natural yogurt is best. You can always add fruit pieces to make it naturally sweeter.
- ✓ **Include a homemade snack** – find recipes for healthy alternatives such as sugar-free flapjacks. If you make it yourself, you know exactly how much sugar is inside.
- ✓ **Stock up on healthy snacks at home** – If children get used to low sugar foods being part of everyday life, it won't seem like such a huge change in their lunchbox. Children model behaviour too so if they see you , other family members or friends eating healthy snacks, they're more likely to want to too!

Sugar Swaps

See how much sugar you could cut out if you swap these lunchbox favourites for something else…

Two Small Chocolate Chip Cookies 1.8 tsp (7g) **SWAP FOR** Pot of Sugar-Free Jelly 0 tsp (0g)

Fruit Bowl Strawberry Flakes 3.5sp (13g) **SWAP FOR** Handful of Strawberries 1 tsp (4g)

Cadburys Chocolate Bar 6.25 tsp (25g) **SWAP FOR** Caramel Rice Cake 1 tsp (4g)

Muller Light Yoghurt 3.1 tsp (12.4g) **SWAP FOR** Natural Yoghurt 0.5 tsp (2g)

Eat Natural Bar 4 tsp (16g) **SWAP FOR** Crackers & Soft Cheese 0 tsp (0.3g)

Nesquik Strawberry Milkshake 12.4 tsp (49.5g) **SWAP FOR** Plain Water 0 tsp (0g)

Tropicana Orange Juice 11.5 tsp (45g) **SWAP FOR** No Added Sugar Orange Cordial 0 tsp (0g)

Save Time…



- Make the packed lunch the night before – save added stress to the morning routine!
- Spend some time at the weekend preparing meals; you can even freeze individual portions and get them out the night before to defrost.
- Plan the lunches across the week – this will help to ensure there is variety of nutritious foods included, plus planning ahead saves money as well as time!
- Get the kids involved. Not only could an extra pairs of hands be useful in the kitchen but having your child help to make the lunch may encourage them to eat it!
- Use leftovers for lunch! If you're making pasta for dinner, cook a little extra and keep aside for lunchboxes. Either reheat and store in a thermos flash, or if suitable serve cold (pasta is delicious cold). *Just make sure you use up the leftovers within two days.*

Save Money…



- Shop at quality, low-cost food stores such as Aldi or Lidll – you could save over 30%!
- Buy own-brand items instead of branded, e.g. Aldi Wholemeal Loaf = 49p; Kingsmill Wholemeal Loaf = 95p.
- Cut your own fruit & veg instead of buying them pre-cut. Carrots can be as little as 39p per kg whereas carrot batons are £1.67 per kg…
- Don't get sucked into buying pre-packaged 'lunch box' items. E.g Buy a 500g bag of raisins (less than 1p per 14g serving) instead of pre-packed mini boxes (more than 10p per 14g serving). Similarly, why pay 37p for a 20g Cheese String when a 20g chunk of cheddar from a block of cheese can be as low as 18p?
- Buy reusable food containers instead of using cling film, foil or sandwich bags ; it will work out cheaper in the long run, plus is better for the environment.
- Similarly, buy a reusable water bottle instead of cartons, cans or plastic bottles which simply get thrown away.

Packed Lunch Ideas & Inspiration

Here are some tasty suggestions of what could be included in your child's packed lunch:

A Sandwich, Bagel, Wrap, Chapatti or Pitta

There are loads of fillings you can choose from, and variety is definitely a good idea. Try to use wholemeal versions if you can – if your child prefers white bread, why not try using 50/50 versions instead, or one slice each of white and wholemeal? Try to add some vegetables to your sandwich fillings, too.

Some ideas include:

- Grated lower-fat cheese with tomatoes & onion
- Tinned tuna & sweetcorn
- Ham with lettuce, cucumber & tomatoes
- Leftover turkey with peppers & spring onions
- Low fat cream cheese & cucumber
- Salmon pâté with salad leaves & cucumber
- Falafel, grated carrot & lettuce leaves
- Left over chicken with spinach
- Egg with salad leaves



Pasta Salad

There are many ingredients you can mix together to make a pasta salad. Try to use wholemeal pasta if you can. If your child does not like wholemeal, try mixing half white pasta with half wholemeal pasta and see if they notice the difference. These recipes would also work well with cooked and cooled rice, boiled and sliced potatoes, couscous or quinoa. Suggestions include:



- Tinned tuna, sweetcorn & grated carrot
- Roasted vegetables (peppers, red onion, aubergines and/or courgette all work well) & grated cheese
- Chopped ham, grated cheese, diced peppers & spring onion
- Diced & cooked green veg such as green beans, courgettes & peas, halved cherry tomatoes, cooked chicken or prawns and pesto



Homemade Mini Pizzas

Spread some tomato purée and fresh or dried herbs onto a pitta bread, then top with vegetables such as onion, sweetcorn, peppers, courgettes, spinach or rocket. You could also add some cooked chicken or ham. Then add some grated cheese or slices of mozzarella. Grill until the cheese is melted. Cool and place in the lunchbox in the fridge for the next day.

Easy Frittatas / Omelettes

Frittatas & omelettes are a great lunchbox item. You can add any vegetables, beans, pulses, meat and cheese that you like, and it is a great way to use up any leftovers.

They are great cooked in a muffin tray to make individual portions (which can also be frozen).

Some favourites include:

- Ham, cheese, mushroom & onion
- Mediterranean veg (peppers, courgette, onion, aubergine) with a sprinkle of cheese
- Potato, pesto, green beans & tuna





Easy Mexican Quesadillas

These are a great way to use up leftover veg. Spread a wrap with tomato puree or pesto (nut free), add diced veg (peppers, tomatoes, sweetcorn & spring onions all work well) plus grated cheese, top with another wrap and toast in a hot pan, turning once the first side is toasted. Let the quesadilla cool before placing it in the fridge in the lunchbox.

D.I.Y Cheeseboard

Let your child have a pick& mix cheeseboard for lunch! Pack a portion of their favourite cheese (30g), 4-5 crackers (wholegrain if possible) along with a selection of fruit & vegetables – grapes, raisins, olives, sliced tomatoes, celery & cucumber all work well.



Sample Healthy Lunch Menu

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Pitta with ham, cheese & sliced mushrooms	Salmon, pea & sweetcorn pasta salad	Hummus & grated carrot wrap	Cheese & tomato sandwich	Mixed vegetable frittata
Carrot & cucumber sticks	An apple	Chopped fruit salad	Tinned pears (in juice), *drained*	A banana
Slice of malt loaf	Small pot of rice pudding	Plain yoghurt with sliced fruit	Plain popcorn	Cheese and crackers
Skimmed milk	Water	Water	Skimmed milk	Water

A Brief Word on Portion Sizes…

Carefully consider the portion sizes that you include in your child's packed lunch. They should have the amount they can finish comfortably, with little or no waste.

It seems obvious, but a 5-year-old needs less food than a 10-year-old, and a 10-year-old needs less food than an adult. If children eat more than their bodies need, it converts to stored fat, which in later life can lead to health problems. So if you, as an adult, would eat a full pitta bread, maybe your 5-year-old only needs half of one? And maybe give just 2 rice cakes instead of more – not only are you helping your child, but you'll save money too!

Besides, too much food and too much choice can be overwhelming and unappetising. And, if you pack a big portion of something they really like (eg. popcorn), they are less likely to eat the other things they least prefer (eg. carrots). You might actually find that the less you pack, the more they eat!

And a Quick Note on Storage…

How lunch boxes are stored, and whether they are kept cool, can be an important factor in the type of foods included.

Using an insulated lunchbox or including ice packs in lunch boxes is the best way of storing food until lunchtime. Or why not fill a water bottle ¾ full and freeze? Stored next to the lunchbox this will help to keep the food cool and also provide a refreshing drink as the ice melts throughout the day.

Healthy Packed Lunch Checklist

Below is a handy checklist to help you to make sure that your child's packed lunch is balanced

You can even get your child involved by checking off the items in the lunchbox against the list – it is a good way to teach them about different types of food.

		YES/NO
A starchy food?	Bread, rice, pasta, potatoes *(wholemeal or wholegrain are great options)*	
At least one portion of vegetables?	Carrot, cucumber or pepper sticks; cherry tomatoes, peas, sweetcorn, green beans, salad *(these are just examples – there are many more options which you can include)*	
At least one portion of fruit?	Any whole fresh fruit *(chop grapes in half for younger children)*; tinned or frozen fruit; small portion of dried fruit	
A source of protein?	Meat, fish, eggs, beans, lentils, tofu, Quorn, hummus	
A dairy or alternative?	Cheese, yoghurt, milk	
A suitable drink?	Water or milk (skimmed, semi-skimmed or fortified unsweetened alternative)	
Optional: a healthier extra lunchbox item	A slice of malt loaf or banana bread, a teacake or low sugar flapjack/ cereal bar, rice pudding pot or fruit pot Pretzels, plain popcorn, seeds, rice or corn cakes with cream cheese, crackers and cheese, vegetable or bread sticks with a dip.	

For Further Information, Inspiration & Ideas....

Check out these websites:

Eat Smart Sheffield
https://www.learnsheffield.co.uk/Partners/eat-smart-sheffield/

Sheffield is Sweet Enough
https://www.sheffieldissweetenough.org/

Food Active
https://foodactive.org.uk/

Change4Life
https://www.nhs.uk/change4life

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide/

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