

CREATING A HEALTHY LUNCHBOX

With children heading back to school soon, we are hearing lots of parents talking about the daily frustration with the "lunchbox"!

How do you create a healthy lunch box that kids will actually eat? I'm sure every parent can imagine the look on little John or Jill's face if they opened their lunch box to see stalks of fresh asparagus or some other boring healthy options.

You can, however, provide a healthy lunch for your child in a way that doesn't make them want to slam the lunch box lid closed. It's time to get creative!

Kids simply love variations and surprise..

Instead of using the same white bread everyday, try using various kinds of bread like whole-wheat, multi-grain, omega 3 or flax bread. If they stick to the same old cheese sandwich every day on white bread, try using a cookie cutter to make a different shape, it may well be their first understanding that variety is the spice of life!

Of course you don't need to use traditional bread at all to make healthy sandwiches for lunch you can use bagels, dinner rolls, hot cross buns, scones, fajita wraps or pitta pockets. If possible choose whole grains for a rich source of fibre, vitamins and antioxidants.

You don't need to use processed meats every day; you can try creating a healthy lunch by using cooked meat from the evening dinner, just buy and cook a little bit more with the sandwiches in mind. E.G. a few slices of roast chicken, makes an ideal sandwich filling, just add your favourite dressing, or a couple of slices of home cooked ham dressed with mustard mayonnaise makes a tangy sandwich filler. Sliced pizza, quiche and sausage are all popular and tasty when cold.

If you involve the children in preparing their own lunches they are more likely to eat everything, we know kids love making their own foods so a burrito or pitta pocket can be a fun and healthy lunch box option

Kids love dips! So you can prepare diced or sliced vegetables with a small container of their favourite sauce. Or simply pack easy to carry fruit and vegetables like bananas, baby carrots, cherry tomatoes or grapes. Low fat yogurts, sour cream, hummus and tzatziki are popular healthy choices.

Try preparing healthy trail mix as a snack, mix nuts, crunchy wholegrain cereals and dried fruits such as raisins, apricots and prunes. Just keep an eye on the portion size!

Try kiddie size yogurts. They provide a good source of calcium.

Always include a drink to go to keep your child hydrated and help them concentrate. Go for still/sparkling water, semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, or unsweetened fruit juice.

Add a fruit smoothie made from natural yoghurt, mixed berries and maybe a dash of honey, or maybe a home-made milkshake (try mixing semi-skimmed milk with puréed strawberries or raspberries).

One of the mums in our office offered the following tried and tested lunchbox tip:

Known as the "three bowl approach":

Fill one bowl with fruit, one with treats and one with dairy (such as tubs of yogurt or cheese sticks)
Let the kids make their own lunches by choosing one item from each bowl. Just add a sandwich and a bottle of water and... the lunch is ready!

And nearly all the Mums stuck in a little "love note" at least once a week!