

### Top Tips for Healthy, Fun Lunch boxes.

Here are ten tried and tested ways to make your child's lunch healthier, more nutritious and more fun:

1. **Make eating fruit fun.** Most children will leave food that takes a lot of effort to eat as they want a quick refuelling stop leaving maximum time for the playground. Peel clementines and cover with plastic wrap, cut kiwi fruit in half or make bite-sized pieces of fruit.
2. **Cut down on salt.** Children tend to consume too much salt in their diet. Many manufactured foods made especially for lunchboxes, such as cheese strings, processed ham and cheese lunch packs and crisps, are very high in salt. Eating foods that contain potassium (such as bananas and apricots) help to balance the effect of salt in the body.
3. **Ensure salads remain crisp.** When making salads it is a good idea to keep the salad dressing separate and let your child pour it over the salad at lunchtime to prevent it from going soggy.
4. **Build on your child's tastes.** Talk to your child and find out what they enjoyed in their lunchbox. Look at what comes back untouched and find out why it wasn't eaten. Ask if there are any foods they would like to try.
5. **Save time.** Lunches can be prepared the night before to save time in the morning. Prepare pasta salads, sandwich fillings and fruit compotes.
6. **Keep food cool.** If you want to keep the contents of your child's lunchbox cool, try freezing a carton or plastic bottle of juice overnight. The frozen drink will help to keep food cool and will have defrosted by lunchtime. Choose pure fruit juices or fruit smoothies, not fruit juice 'drinks' which tend to be high in added sugar.
7. **Freshen up.** Cut-up vegetable sticks can dry out so it is a good idea to wrap them in some damp kitchen paper to retain moisture.
8. **Cut down on junk.** Avoid too many processed foods as they tend to contain few nutrients and too much salt, sugar, additives and saturated fat. If your child likes crisps but you don't want him to fill up by eating a whole bag, put some in a small bag or wrap some crisps in foil.
9. **Add a personal touch.** Tuck a surprise like a note, stickers or joke in your child's lunchbox or put in a special treat. Pack fun napkins, decorate lunch bags with stickers, draw a face on a banana with a marker pen or cut sandwiches into novelty shapes using biscuit cutters. At the weekend get your children involved in the kitchen making things like cookies and muffins which they can then take to school during the week. Not only is it cheaper but you also know exactly what went into them.
10. **Be Creative.** Think outside the box! Pack mini pizza slices, mini hamburgers, meatballs or chicken drumsticks. Add some potato wedges on the side. Try tortilla chips with strips of cheese, turkey and sliced tomatoes on the side. Add a sour cream and/or guacamole dip for instant lunch time nachos, perfect for older children. How about some baked savoury mini muffins using chopped, cooked bacon and chives or grated cheese and ham. Sweet fruit mini muffins will be a big hit too.

