

Healthy Lunches should include:

Fruit: At least 1 serving of fruit.

Vegetables: At least 1 serving of veggies.

Protein: At least 1 serving of protein, whether it's in the form of meat or poultry, nuts, legumes, or dairy.

Complex Carbohydrates: Whole grains are essential for long lasting energy and proper brain development.

Please don't forget about water

Your child should have a water bottle EVERYDAY!

Kids Need Water!

It fends off dehydration, helps regulate weight, and even prevents cavities. Here's how to make sure your child chugs enough of the wet stuff.

By Sandra Gordon

Your kids probably drink plenty of juice and milk each day. But don't forget about water. Although it has no nutrients, H₂O is essential to your child's health. Water aids digestion, helps prevent constipation, and is vital for proper blood circulation. It also helps transport nutrients and oxygen to cells, cushions joints and protects organs and tissues, helps regulate body temperature, and maintains electrolyte (sodium) balance.

Children need the same amount of water as adults: about one quart for every 1,000 calories they expend. (The exception is infants, who shouldn't drink water; breast milk or formula is enough.) But don't worry about the math -- let your child's thirst be your guide, says Joel Steinberg, M.D., a professor of pediatrics at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, in Dallas. Just make sure to offer water between meals. A benchmark that kids are drinking enough: "They're urinating every few hours," says Michael Farrell, M.D., chief of staff at Children's Hospital Medical Center of Cincinnati.

Water can keep a child at a healthy weight.

You've probably heard the sobering statistic that 15 percent of school-age kids in the U.S. are overweight or obese, conditions that often lead to adult illnesses like heart disease and diabetes. Give your child a head start on a healthy life by encouraging her to drink water or juice spritzers (seltzer with a splash of unsweetened fruit juice), instead of sugar-laden juice boxes or soda. And don't forget to be a good role model by chugging water yourself between meals. "If children see a parent drinking water, they're more likely to drink it too," says Rachel K. Johnson, Ph.D., R.D., a professor of nutrition at the University of Vermont, in Burlington. At meals, though, you should definitely give your child milk. "Kids need the calcium in milk for bone strength," Dr. Johnson says.

Whole Grains

Whole grains are a nutrition-packed carbohydrate choice for children. They grains have been minimally processed to retain B vitamins, fiber and carbohydrates. Whole grains include brown or wild rice, whole wheat, millet, quinoa and barley. These grains may be found in a variety of kid-friendly foods like whole grain wheat breads and bread products, cereals and whole grain pasta. It is best to choose products that list whole grain as the first or second ingredient on their labels. Enriched grains, like white rice, also contain carbohydrates, but lose nutritional value during processing. Vitamins and nutrients are added back to enriched grain products, but they still do not offer the same nutrition and fiber benefit as whole grains. KidsHealth.org suggests choosing whole grain products over enriched grain products as much as possible for better nutrition.

Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables contain carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals that provide growing children with nutrition and energy. Choose fruits that your child enjoys and incorporate them into meals and snacks. Common child-friendly fruits that contain carbohydrates include bananas, cherries, citrus fruits, blueberries, apples, peaches, pears and melons. Vegetables may be enjoyed raw or cooked. The National Diabetes Education Program recommends children consume 2 to 2 1/2 cups of raw or cooked vegetables per day. Good vegetable carbohydrate choices include carrots, broccoli, salad greens, corn, peas and peppers.

Dairy Product

Milk and milk products are good carbohydrate choices for kids. Dairy products offer calcium for growing bones and teeth as well as carbohydrates for energy. Choose low-fat dairy products to avoid unnecessary fat and calories. Low-fat milk, yogurt, ice cream, cheese and cream cheese are good dairy choices.

Snacks

Snack foods may offer carbohydrates, but not necessarily the good kind. Some simple carbohydrates, like refined white sugar, do not offer nutritional value and do not provide the body with long-term energy. Kids should consume snacks and other foods with high sugar content in moderation. It is best to limit their consumption of candy, cakes, cookies and sodas.

Easy School Lunch Ideas – Sandwiches

Protein Filling Ideas

- Egg salad/mashed egg
- Cheese (don't limit yourself to cheddar for more variety use other delicious cheeses such as brie, feta)
- Ham
- Tuna
- Turkey
- Roast beef or lamb

Vegetable Filling Ideas

- Lettuce
- Spinach
- Avocado
- Carrots
- Tomato
- Cucumber
- Beetroot
- Roasted pumpkin
- Capsicum (roasted or fresh)

Dressings, Spreads and Condiments Ideas

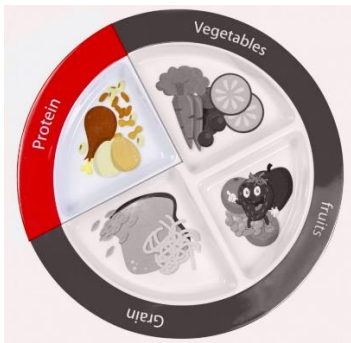
- Hummus
- Pesto (if allowed)
- Mayonaise
- Cranberry sauce
- Cream cheese
- Nut (if allowed) or seed butters
- Marmite/vegemite/promite

Sandwich Combination Ideas

- Mashed egg and lettuce
- Mashed egg and ham
- Poached or crumbed chicken and salad

- Pumpkin, spinach and roast capsicum with pesto (maybe one for the Mums or the older kids)
- Lettuce and cream cheese
- Lettuce and marmite
- Peanut butter, coconut and carrot
- Ham and cheese
- Ham and salad
- Cucumber and tuna salad

Kids need protein to build, repair, grow, and maintain all cells in the body. Protein takes a primary role in the growth of muscle and tissue growth and repair. Sometimes it is hard to think of good protein choices for kids. Often, meat is the first choice that comes to mind. For children under 36 months, meat can be difficult to chew and is sometimes not appealing to children of that age. The good news is that there are many other protein choices available!



How much protein do kids need?

Kids need 0.45-0.55 grams of protein per pound of body weight. For example, a 30 pound child needs about 15 grams of protein per day.

Another way to measure for kids, is to encourage 2-4 ounces of meat or beans, plus 2 cups of dairy per day.

What are some protein choices besides meat?

Beans:

Contain about 7.5g of protein per ½ cup. Beans are full of fiber, protein, and B vitamins. Beans of all kinds work best in soups, salads, veggie burgers, dips, and burritos.

Types of Beans: Black, Pinto, Kidney, Garbanzo, Navy, White, Lima, Fava, Black-eyed Peas.

Nuts:

Contain about 15g of protein per 1/2 cup. Nuts contain Omega 3 fatty acids, vitamin E and fiber. Great for snacking, salads, nut butters.

Types of Nuts: Almonds, Hazelnuts, Peanuts, Cashews, Brazil nuts, Chestnut, Pecan, Walnut.

Quinoa:

Contains 4g of protein per ½ cup, cooked. It's a tiny little seed that provides the nine essential amino acids our bodies can't produce on their own, making it a complete protein. It contains fiber, iron, magnesium, and manganese. It is a great alternative to meat, and can be substituted for pasta, rice, and couscous or added to soups or salads for an extra protein boost.

Edamame:

Contains 8.5g of protein per 1/2 cup. Edamame is high in fiber, Vitamins C and B, and antioxidants. It is great eaten by itself as a snack, in salads, pureed in a dip, and stir-fried.

Lentils:

Contains 9g of protein per ½ cup, cooked. Lentils are high in folate, iron, potassium, and antioxidants. Lentils come in red and green varieties and can be used in soups, stews, salads, veggie burgers, dips, and nearly any type of Indian cuisine.

Tofu:

Contains 7g of protein per ½ cup. Tofu is made from soy bean curds (which makes it sound a lot less tasty than it can actually be). It can be baked, grilled, fried, steamed, sautéed, or eaten raw (it comes in soft, firm, and extra firm varieties, each of which is best suited to certain methods of cooking). Since it absorbs the flavor of whatever it's cooked with, tofu tastes best paired with bold flavored foods.

Eggs:

Contain about 6g of protein per large egg. Eggs are a complete protein containing all 9 essential amino acids. They contain B vitamins, Vitamin E, and Omega 3 fatty acids. Some fun ways to include eggs in your child's diet include:

We like "one eyed monsters' 'toad in the hole' or whatever you choose to call this fun egg breakfast. We cut a circle out of the middle of bread, spray both sides of the bread with butter-flavored cooking spray, lay the bread on a hot griddle, and crack the egg in the middle of the bread. Cook thoroughly on both sides. Also grill slightly the cut out circle of bread and serve both the "face with the one eye egg" and the extra bread.

Stuff a pita pocket with scrambled eggs. A pita can be easier to handle and hold. Pita pockets are also high in fiber.

Some kids don't like the taste of eggs, but they love french toast. Mix two to three eggs in a shallow dish. Add a touch of cinnamon, some vanilla extract, and some low-fat milk. Dip the slices of whole-wheat bread into the egg mixture. Make sure to get a healthy coating of the egg mixture to ensure maximum egg benefits.