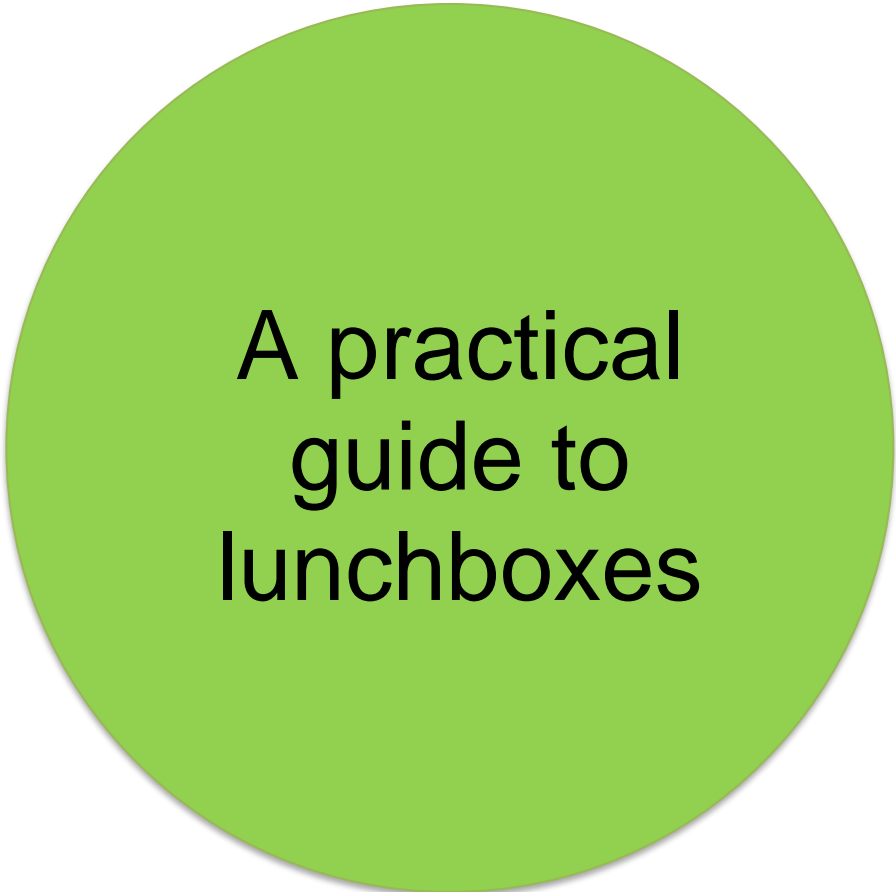


1 – 4
years

Eating well in Early Years



A practical
guide to
lunchboxes

This guide aims to provide practical advice for those preparing packed food for children aged 1 to 4 years. It may be used in Early Years settings to provide extra information to parents and ensure that every child receives the optimum nutrition to support healthy growth and development.

Key principles



Include a large **Variety** of foods to ensure that important vitamins and minerals are consumed.



The child's diet should include **5 Portions of fruit and vegetables** per day.



The child's **sugar** intake should be **limited** as sugary foods contribute to tooth decay and provide few nutrients.

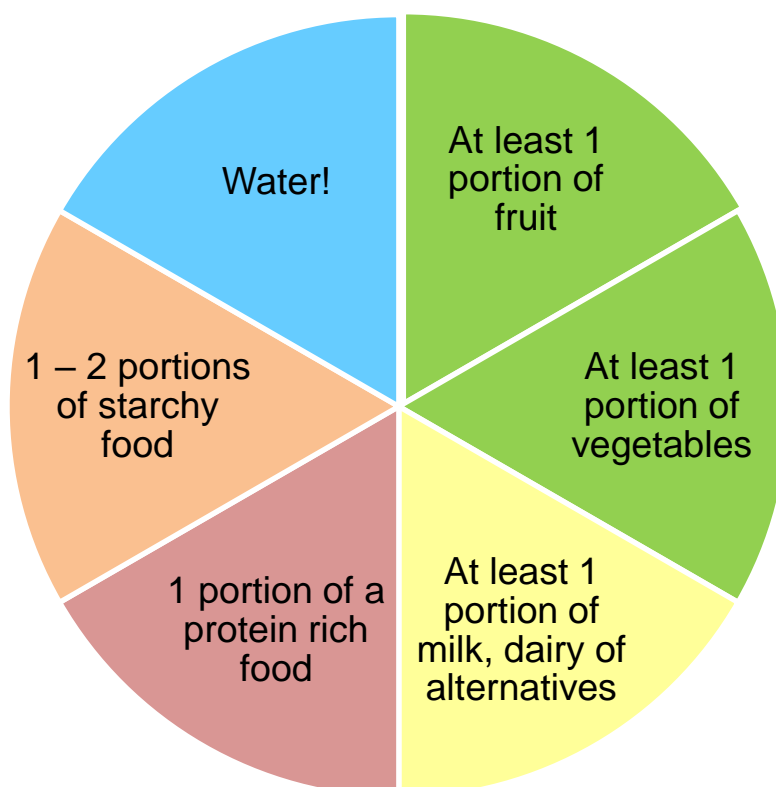


Staying **hydrated** is important; water should be encouraged as the drink of choice and should be available at all times.



The child's **Salt** intake should be **limited** so steer clear of heavily processed foods.

What does a good packed lunch include?



Starchy foods

Foods from this group provide energy as well as a source of fibre and B vitamins.

- ★ Provide both white and wholemeal options as wholemeal foods can cause children to become full before they have taken in the energy they require.



Fruits and vegetables

Foods from this group provide a source of vitamins including vitamins A and C. They also provide minerals particularly Zinc and iron.

- ✓ Serve tinned fruit in natural juice only! Watch out for high sugar versions containing syrups
- ★ Avoid providing fruit juice as it is high in sugar and fruit acids that contribute to tooth decay
- ✓ Provide a variety of fruits and vegetables to encourage experimentation with new tastes



Protein rich foods

Foods from this group provide protein which is essential for healthy growth. They also provide a source of Iron, Zinc, Vitamins A and D and oily fish provides omega 3 fatty acids which promote brain and heart health.

- ✓ Limit consumption of processed meats such as sausages and chicken nuggets and choose products with a high meat content.
- ✓ pulses, nut butters, tofu and meat alternatives can be provided for vegetarian or vegan children



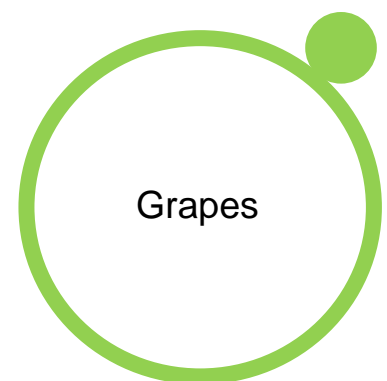
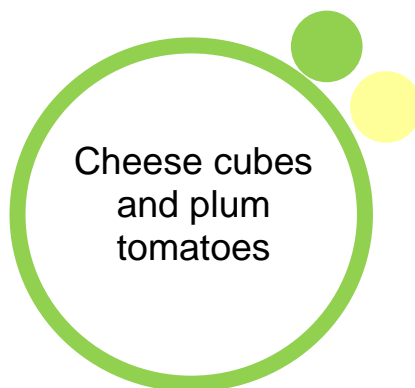
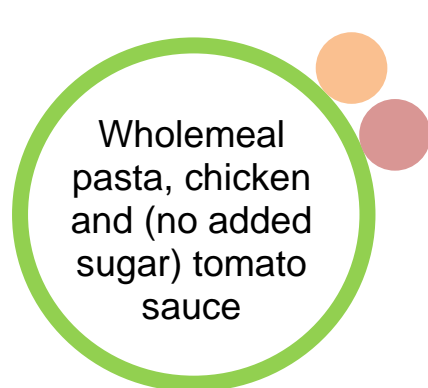
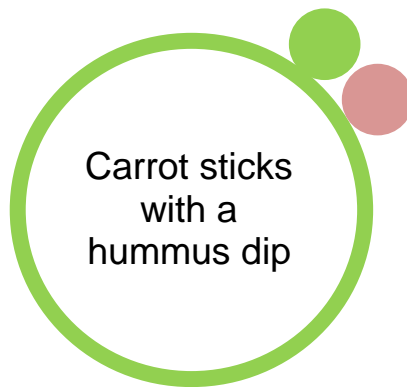
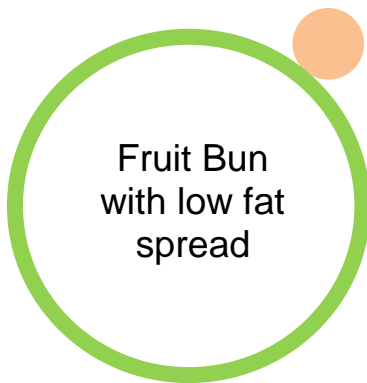
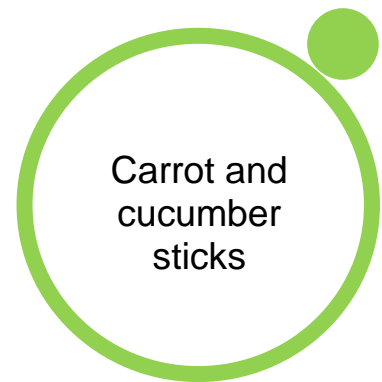
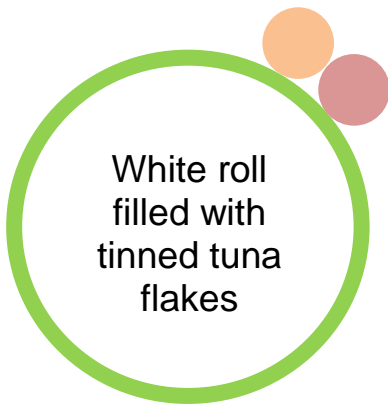
Milk, Dairy + Alternatives

Foods from this group provide calcium which is essential for the development of strong bones and teeth. They also provide energy, protein and vitamin A.

- ✓ Calcium fortified, unsweetened milk alternatives can be provided to children aged 1+
- ★ Watch out for dairy products such as yoghurts which may have a high sugar content and chesses which may be high in fat and salt.



Examples of lunch box meals



Key



Starchy foods



Fruits and vegetables



Protein rich foods



Milk, Dairy and Alternatives

Why?

Preparing a child's lunchbox in this way ensures that the child receives the adequate energy and nutrients needed for healthy growth and development.

Vitamin A is good for my **vision**

Starchy carbohydrates give me the **energy** I need to **play** and **learn** effectively

Too much sugar is bad for my **teeth** and causes them to **decay**

Fibre helps to keep my **digestive system** healthy and feeds my friendly **gut bacteria**

Iron and Zinc help my **immune system** to function at its best

Calcium helps my **bones** and **teeth** grow **stronger**

Staying well hydrated helps to **regulate** my **body temperature** and make sure my **brain functions** properly

Protein allows my body to **build muscle** and **repair** itself



This resource has been developed in line with the national nutrition guidance for early year's settings in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

For further information try these links

FIRST STEPS NUTRITION TRUST



http://firststepsnutrition.org/pdfs/Packed_lunches_Dec17.pdf



<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/media/9750/eat-well-practical-guide-final-check.pdf>