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### Dear Parent/Carer

**School meals are a great choice for your child, but if you choose to make a packed lunch for them instead here are some tips for preparing a healthier lunchbox.**

#### **Making lunchboxes healthier:**

It may take a while for your child to get used to a healthier lunchbox but keep trying. These tips may help:

- Get your children involved in preparing and choosing what goes in their lunchbox. They're more likely to eat it if they helped prepare it.
- If you give your child a packed lunch, there are many ways you can add fruit and vegetables. Put salad in their sandwiches, or give them carrot or celery sticks, cherry tomatoes, satsumas or seedless grapes. Dried fruit counts towards their 5 A DAY, so why not try a handful of sultanas or a few dried apricots as a dessert?

**Government packed lunch advice:** The UK government has produced packed lunch guidance to ensure that all children benefit from eating quality food during the school day.

The guidelines are:

- One portion of fruit and one portion of vegetable or salad **every day** to be included in packed lunches
- Meat, fish or another source of non-dairy protein should be included **every day**. Non-dairy sources of protein include lentils, kidney beans, chickpeas, hummus, peanut butter and falafel
- An oily fish, such as salmon, should be included at least once every three weeks
- A starchy food, such as bread or pasta, rice, couscous, noodles, potatoes or other cereals, should be included every day
- A dairy food, such as semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais or custard should be included **every day**
- Include only water, still or sparkling, fruit juice, semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, yoghurt or milk drinks and smoothies



- Snacks such as crisps should **not** be included. Instead, include nuts, seeds, vegetables and fruit (with no added salt, sugar or fat). Savoury crackers or breadsticks served with fruit, vegetables or dairy food are also a good choice
- Confectionery such as chocolate bars, chocolate-coated biscuits and sweets **should not be included**. Cakes and biscuits are allowed but these should be part of a balanced meal
- Meat products such as sausage rolls, individual pies corned meat and sausages / chipolatas should be **included only occasionally**.

Finally, bacteria in lunch bags can come from many sources, including processed sandwich meats, and even fresh fruits and vegetables. When those bacteria rub onto the inside of a lunch box or lunch bag, they can multiply to dangerous levels, it is therefore important that the lunch box or bag is cleaned and disinfected every day.

Follow the link below to get hints and tips on what their lunchbox should contain as well as lots of easy-to-prepare ideas your children will love.

<https://www.nhs.uk/change4life-beta/healthier-lunchboxes>

If you are having difficulties providing the right food for your child or would like any support or advice, please contact

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*Hayley Marshall*

