

How to order a healthy school lunch

In today's busy world, ordering lunch has become a popular option for parents, caregivers and whānau. Ordering your child's lunch online makes life a lot easier – but how do you know if what you're purchasing is healthy?



It's important that we get it right because the food in our children's lunchboxes can contribute one-third of their daily energy intake from food.

A balanced lunch should contain food items from each of the four food groups:

- vegetables and fruit
- grain foods and starchy vegetables
- legumes, fish, seafood, eggs, poultry and lean meat
- milk, yoghurt and cheese.

We've put together some recommendations to help you choose nutritious options from your school lunch order system.

For more food, nutrition and heart-healthy tips visit heartfoundation.org.nz

Lunch



Bread-based options

- Choose whole grain or wholemeal bread for items such as sandwiches, filled rolls and wraps.
- Choose lean protein, such as chicken, roast beef, canned fish, baked beans, eggs or reduced-fat cheese, like Edam.
- Add at least two salad vegetables, such as lettuce, tomatoes, capsicum, cucumber and carrot.
- Choose a spread, such as hummus, cottage cheese, low-fat cream cheese, avocado or peanut butter.
- Choose reduced fat, salt and sugar versions of condiments like mayonnaise or tomato sauce.
- Processed meats such as ham, bacon, sausage and luncheon can have very high levels of salt and saturated fat. Only have them occasionally.



Lunch cont.



Hot meal options

- Order pasta dishes, noodles and rice dishes that come with lots of vegetables.
- Nachos are popular, but corn chips make them a less nutritious option, so ask your supplier to offer baked tortillas or pita breads instead.
- Most pastry items such as sausage rolls and pies have high levels of saturated fat, which make them a less nutritious option and are not recommended.
- Soup in winter is a great option too.
- Don't be afraid to ask your supplier which sauces and ingredients they use.



Cold options

- Choose pasta salads or brown rice salads that come with vegetables, beans and lightly dressed.
- If vegetables are not included, ask your supplier to make them available.
- If ordering sushi, ask for low-sodium soy sauce. Remember sushi is usually low in vegetables, so pack extra vege snacks or order extra veges like edamame beans and carrot.

If we all advocate for nutritious meals, the caterers will oblige – they want to make us happy enough to come back!

Snacks



Sweet snacks

- Choose fruit-based snacks like fruit salad, fruit and yoghurt cups, fruit custard or fruit muffins.
- For baked items, look for those containing whole grains (oat or bran), fruit or vegetables such as banana bread or bran apple muffins and savoury muffins with corn and cheese.



Savoury snacks

- Choose natural popcorn, crackers with Edam cheese, vegetable sticks with hummus, and unsalted, unsweetened nuts.
- If there is a choice, choose whole grain crackers.

Drinks

- The best drinks for children are water and plain milk.



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