



The Little Hands guide to lunch sessions and a healthy lunchbox

Little hands offers a lunch session each day between 12 - 1pm with children bringing their own packed lunch. This is a very popular session and should be booked in advance. The lunch sessions are planned and organised using guidelines provided by the Action for Children Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings (2017)



Attending Lunch

The lunch session provides many opportunities to teach children about healthy eating and lifestyle, hygiene & organisation as well as developing important social skills and independence. The children eat together in small groups with a staff member; they independently manage their own lunch, but a member of staff is always nearby to help if it is needed. Children are encouraged to eat healthy foods before any treats.

Lunch Session Timetable

Preparing for lunch	toileting / nappy changing as appropriate for individual children hand washing
Lunch time	children sit in small groups with a staff member
Playtime	15 minutes to either play or spend quietly Toileting/nappy changing as appropriate for individual children

Please label the lunchbox and any containers with your child's name - staff will label any unnamed boxes. Lunchboxes are stored in a cool area. However, should you have any food in your child's lunch that must be chilled please pack a named, frozen cool block in your child's lunchbox. Staff will send home uneaten food and packaging from your child's lunchbox so you can easily see what has been eaten.

Environmental Considerations

Where possible we recycle or send home packaging to be recycled at home; we also try re-use packaging from the children's lunch boxes for junk modelling. We would also therefore ask you, when choosing items for your children's lunch boxes, to consider reducing on unnecessary items and packaging. For example, we can provide cutlery for the children to use, removing the need for disposable plastic cutlery.



Allergies, Intolerances and Cultural Diets

We have many children at nursery with intolerances to a wide variety of foods and children following cultural diets. If your child has any dietary needs the nursery staff should be made aware prior to their starting nursery so we can plan. We closely supervise snack and lunch times to ensure children do not eat or drink prohibited food.

In addition, for children having medically diagnosed food allergies, we also work closely with their health team to develop a medical protocol specific to their needs. (for further details see our Allergies, Intolerances and Dietary Requirements policy).

Healthy Eating Information

This information is summarised from the Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings and gives ideas and advice for healthy diets for children aged 2 - 5 years. For further details including portion sizes please ask nursery for an electronic copy of the guidelines or visit:

<https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Eat-Better-Start-Better1.pdf>

A healthy, balanced diet and regular physical activity are essential for children's health and well-being. A healthy balanced diet for children aged 1-5 years is based on the four food groups which provide a range of essential nutrients that children need to grow and develop.

Starchy Foods 4 portions per day

Starchy foods, which provide energy & fibre, include bread, potatoes, sweet potatoes, starchy root vegetables, pasta, noodles, rice, other grains and breakfast cereals. Provide 1 portion per meal & snack

Fruit and Vegetables 5 portions per day

Fruit and vegetables which provide vitamins, minerals & fibre include fresh, frozen, canned, dried and juiced fruit, vegetables and pulses. Provide 1 portion per meal & snack.



Meat, Fish, Eggs, Beans & other non dairy sources of protein 2 portions per day

Meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, eggs, meat alternatives, pulses and nuts provide protein, minerals & vitamins. Provide 1 portion per main meal.

Milk and Dairy & alternatives 3 portions per day

Milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage-frais, custard and puddings made from milk provide energy, proteins, calcium and vitamins. Please note that some dairy alternatives are not suitable for children so please check this before offering them to your child.

Children are unlikely to take in more energy than they need if they are offered a range of healthy meals and snack that meet the food and drink guidelines. Conversely, foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt are unlikely to provide the balance of energy and nutrients that young children need and including them in the diets of very young children may contribute to them becoming overweight and having a poor nutrient intake.

Young children need fat in their diet to ensure they get enough energy. However, if they eat too much fat, they may consume more energy (calories) than they need and may gain excess weight. The type of fat that children eat is also important and the amount of saturated fat found in foods such as meat & meat products, butter, cakes and biscuits should be limited.

It is also important that children do not eat too much sugar and salt. Eating sugary food and drinks too often can lead to tooth decay and provide 'empty calories' which fill children up but do not provide other essential nutrients.

Too much salt can give children a taste for salty foods and eating a diet high in salt can cause serious health conditions in later life. Between the ages of 2 and 5 years children should gradually move towards the diet recommended for older children and adults with less energy provided from fat and more fibre.



Examples of food and drink to include in a packed lunch

Starchy Foods - one portion of white or wholegrain bread, rolls, pitta or wraps. Chapattis, plain naan bread or bagels. Cooked pasta, rice, noodles, couscous or potato. Include a whole grain variety once a week.

Fruit and / or vegetables - at least one portion of carrot, cucumber, pepper or celery sticks. Lentils included in daal. Grated carrot in sandwiches or wraps. Sliced apple, banana, grapes, mixed chopped fruit or strawberries. Dried raisins or apricots. Fruit juice (diluted half juice, half water).

Meat, fish, eggs, beans or other non-dairy sources of protein - one portion of sliced meat, poultry, egg or fish in sandwiches, rolls, wraps, or by themselves. Meat alternative e.g. tofu in salads. Pulses - kidney beans, chickpeas, lentils as part of a bean salad. Nut butter in sandwiches.

Milk or dairy food and alternatives- one portion of yoghurt or fromage-frais. Cheese in sandwiches or wraps. Semi skimmed milk (for children aged 2 or over).

To drink - fruit juice (diluted half juice, half water), semi skimmed milk, water. Avoid salty snacks such as crisps and limit confectionary such as chocolate chips and use as part of cakes or dessert.

Provide a variety of different foods from each group over a week.