

Sparkbrook

Children's Zone



Top Tips for Healthy Eating

Supporting children and families to live happy, healthy lives.



Introduction

What is Sparkbrook Children's Zone?

Our Doctors, Nurse and Family Support Team help children and families to lead happy, healthy lives.

We offer clinics, advice and outreach activities across Balsall Heath, Sparkbrook and Sparkhill.

Children and young people, aged 0 to 16, can get a booked appointment from their GP to see a children's nurse and a doctor, and the whole family is able to receive support from Early Help.

Who is this booklet for?

Teaching your child to eat healthily can be hard, this booklet is to help parents, carers, and professionals through the stages.

Contents

School meals need to meet School Food Standards that provide a well balanced diet to meet a wide range of children’s nutritional needs.

Packed lunches are often based on unhealthy snacks which do not support children’s learning, behaviour or health.

We hope this guide helps you and your children make healthy lunch choices.

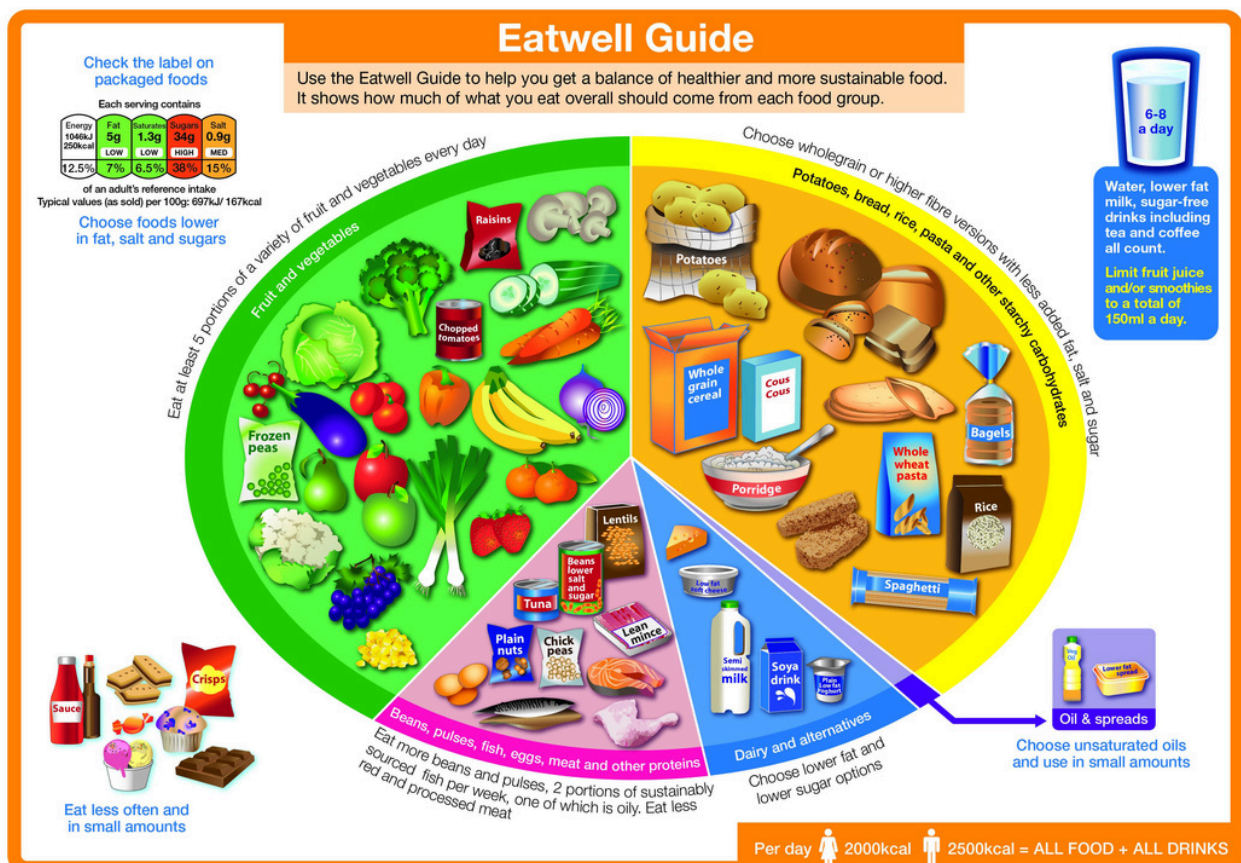
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Benefits of a Healthy Packed Lunch

- They help your child to develop life long healthy eating habits
- It will help children concentrate and have energy throughout the day
- It will support your child to have better oral health and to maintain a healthy weight
- It can reduce food waste for example, leftovers from home can be used to make a healthy lunch
- If children come to school with a healthy varied lunchbox it can help to encourage others to try new foods (great if your child is a little picky!)

Try to base the contents around the main food groups detailed in the Eatwell Guide.



What to include in lunch



Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta

These starchy foods are a healthy source of energy. Good choices include rolls, bread, wraps, chapatti, pitta bread, pasta or rice. Wholemeal varieties are the best option as they contain more fibre than white varieties.



Fresh fruit and vegetables

These provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. Eating these foods keep children healthy and reduce the risk of disease in later life.

Lunches should include at least one portion of fresh fruit and one portion of vegetables per day.



Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat

These foods provide protein for growth. Packed lunches should include one portion of these foods each day. Suggestions include boiled eggs, chicken, soya, quorn, tuna, mackerel, salmon, hummus.

Dairy Alternatives

These foods provide calcium for healthy bones and teeth. Include one portion at lunch for example, a drink of semi skimmed or full fat milk, soya milk, an individual cheese portion or pot of plain or low sugar and low fat yoghurt or a dairy free alternative - chickpeas, lentils, or beans.

Drinks

It is important to stay hydrated, the best drink options are always plain water or milk. Try to avoid fresh fruit juices and fizzy drinks. Squashes are an alternative but should be a sugar free option.



Healthy Packed Lunch Checklist

Use this list to help you check if your children are getting a healthy balanced lunch. Get your children involved in choosing and checking off the items to learn about different types of food.

A starchy food	Bread, rice, pasta, potatoes (wholemeal or wholegrain are best)
At least one portion of vegetables	Carrot, cucumber, pepper sticks, tomatoes, peas, sweetcorn, green beans, salad (these are just examples there are many more options which you can include)
At least one portion of fruit	Any whole fruit which can be fresh, tinned, or frozen
A source of protein	Such as meat or dairy
Optional: a healthier extra lunchbox item	A slice of malt loaf or banana bread, a low sugar flapjack/ cereal bar, rice pudding pot or fruit pot. Pretzels, plain popcorn, rice or corn cakes with cream cheese, crackers and cheese, vegetable or bread sticks with a dip.

Things to Avoid

You should try to avoid foods and drinks that are high in fat, sugar and/or salt as these are bad for our health.

It is advised against including any of these types of items:

- Confectionery, such as chocolate bars, sweets.
- Meat and pastry products, such as sausage rolls or pies.
- Savoury snacks such as crisps or processed meat, for example beef salami.
- Chocolate coated biscuits or wafers.
- Cakes, bakes, buns or slices.
- Fizzy drinks or any other sugar sweetened drinks including milkshakes.



Nut or nut products are not allowed in schools because of the danger they present to children with allergies.

What About Treats?

It is fine to add an extra treat on occasion. Given too often and it won't be seen as 'special' but you should still try to make sure it is a healthier choice.

Some good options include:

- A slice of malt loaf or banana bread, low sugar flapjack/cereal bar
- Rice pudding pot or sugar-free jelly.
- Unsalted pretzels, plain popcorn, rice or corn cakes with cream cheese, crackers & cheese, vegetable or bread sticks with a dip.

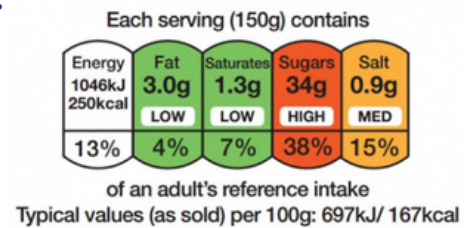
Remember, treats don't have to be food why not add a little note, sticker or joke in the lunchbox to make your little one smile instead.

Save Money



Shop at low-cost food stores and save over 30%!

- Plan ahead to save money.
- Buy own brand items instead of branded items.
- Check food labels and choose items with
- mostly Green labels for low Fat, Sugar and Salt.



- Cut your own fresh fruit & veg instead of buying them pre-cut. Carrots can be as little as 33p per kg whereas carrot batons are £1.50 per kg.
- Don't buy pre-packaged 'lunch box' items. Bag up your own snack items.
- Why pay for 400g processed chicken slices when you can cook a whole 1.9kg chicken that is much healthier and will last much longer for a little more.

Think About Portion Sizes...

- **Your child's packed lunch should be enough to eat comfortably, with little or no waste.**
- **Too much food with too much choice can be overwhelming.**
- **If you pack a large portion of something they really like, they are less likely to eat the healthy things they like less.**
- **You might find that the less you pack, the more they eat.**

Five year olds need less food than 10 year olds and 10 year olds needs less food than adults. Eating too much converts to stored fat, which can lead to health problems.

Save money and help your child by not overfeeding them..

Let's Talk About Sugar...

Eating too much sugar can result in weight gain and increases our risk of health problems such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

Sugar is bad for our teeth. It can cause tooth decay which can look bad and can be extremely painful. If not dealt with, rotten teeth can need to be removed and lead to further health issues.

Too much sugar can also have more immediate effects on our behaviour and concentration levels.

BUT – how much is too much?

It is not always easy to know how much sugar we should have or how much there is in the food and drinks we consume.

Here are the recommended daily limits of sugar intake - this is not a target to aim for but the maximum amount of sugar we should consume in one day (the less sugar, the better).

Age	Teaspoons	In Grams
0-3 Years Old	0	0g
4-6 Years Old	4.5	19g
7-11 Years Old	5.5	24g
11+ Years Old	7.3	30g

Natural sugars found in milk, fresh fruit and vegetables do not count towards this limit. Remember, dried fruit actually contains MORE sugar than fresh varieties.



Tips for Low Sugar Lunch Boxes

- Stick to low sugar sandwich fillings—avoid anything sweet like jam, marmalade or chocolate spread.
- Ditch the fizzy drinks, juice boxes & milkshakes –these contain surprisingly high amounts of sugar. For example, a Friij Fudge Brownie Milkshake has 13.5tsp. (54g) of sugar!
- Limit pre-packaged, processed foods—not only are these expensive and bad for the environment, they also contain high levels of sugar, artificial flavours and colours.



- Check your choice of yoghurts, some contain lots of sugar, especially the split pot varieties. Natural yogurt is best and you can always add fresh fruit pieces to make it naturally sweeter.
- Include a home made snack—find recipes for healthy alternatives such as sugar-free flapjacks. If you make it yourself, you know exactly how much sugar is included.
- Stock up on healthy snacks at home—If children get used to low sugar foods being part of every day life, it won't seem like such a huge change. Children model behaviour too so if they see you, other family members or friends eating healthy snacks, they're more likely to want these too!

Sugar Swaps

See how much sugar you could cut out if you swap these lunchbox favourites for something else...

Fruit Bowl Strawberry Flakes 3.5 tsp (13g)

SWAP FOR

Handful of Strawberries or other fruit 1 tsp (4g)

Cadburys Chocolate Bar 6.25 tsp (25g)

SWAP FOR

Caramel Rice Cake 1 tsp (4g)

Muller Light Yoghurt 3.1 tsp (12.4g)

SWAP FOR

Natural Yoghurt 0.5 tsp (2g)

Nesquik Strawberry Milkshake 12.4 tsp (49.5g)

SWAP FOR

Plain Water 0 tsp (0g)

Tropicana Orange Juice 11.5 tsp (45g)

SWAP FOR

Fruit slices in ice water (0g)



Save Time...

- Make the packed lunch the night before to save stress in the morning.
- Spend some time at the weekend preparing meals. You can even freeze individual portions and get them out the night before to defrost.
- Plan lunches across the week. This will help to ensure there are a variety of nutritious foods included, plus planning ahead saves money as well as time.
- Get the kids involved! An extra pair of hands be useful in the kitchen, and having your child help to make the lunch may encourage them to eat it.
- Use leftovers for lunches. If you're making pasta for dinner, cook extra and serve cold (it's delicious). Make sure to use the leftovers within two days.

Lunch Ideas

Find more great lunchbox ideas on Healthier Families online

www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/

A Sandwich, Bagel, Wrap, Chapatti or Pitta

There are loads of fillings you can choose from, and variety is definitely a good thing. Try to use wholemeal versions if you can - if your child prefers white bread, why not try using 50/50 versions instead, or one slice each of white and wholemeal? Try to add some vegetables to your sandwich fillings too, such as:

- Grated lower-fat cheese with tomatoes & onion
- Tinned tuna & sweetcorn
- Ham with lettuce, cucumber & tomatoes
- Low fat cream cheese & cucumber
- Falafel, grated carrot & lettuce leaves
- Egg with salad leaves



Pasta Salad

There are many ingredients you can mix together to make a pasta salad. Try to use wholemeal pasta if you can. If your child does not like wholemeal, try mixing half white pasta with half wholemeal pasta. These recipes would also work well with cooked and cooled rice, boiled and sliced potatoes, couscous or quinoa. Suggestions include:

- Tinned tuna, sweetcorn & grated carrot
- Roasted vegetables (peppers, red onion, aubergines and/or courgette all work well) & grated cheese
- Chopped ham, grated cheese, diced peppers & spring onion
- Diced & cooked green veg such as green beans, courgettes & peas, halved cherry tomatoes, cooked chicken and pesto



Homemade Mini Pizzas

Spread some tomato puree and fresh or fried herbs onto a pitta bread, then top with vegetables such as onion, sweetcorn, peppers, courgettes, spinach or rocket. You could also add some cooked chicken or ham. Then add some grated cheese or slices of mozzarella. Grill until the cheese has melted. Cool and place in the lunchbox in the fridge for the next day.



Easy Frittatas/ Omelettes

Add any vegetables, beans, pulses, meat and cheese that you like, and it is a great way to use up any leftovers.

They are great cooked in a muffin tray to make individual portions (which can also be frozen). Some favourites include:

- Ham, cheese, mushroom & onion
- Mediterranean veg (Peppers, Courgette, Onion, Aubergine) and a sprinkle of cheese



Easy Mexican Quesadillas

These are a great way to use up leftover veg. Spread a wrap with tomato puree or pesto (nut free), add diced veg (peppers, tomatoes, sweetcorn & spring onions all work well) plus grated cheese, top with another wrap and toast in a hot pan, turning once the first side is toasted. Let the quesadilla cool before placing in the lunchbox.



D.I.Y Cheeseboard

Pack a portion of your child's favourite cheese (30g), 4-5 crackers (wholegrain if possible) along with a selection of fruit & vegetables - grapes, raisins, olives, sliced tomatoes, celery and cucumber all work well.



More Information and Ideas....



Download the free NHS Food Scanner app. With a speedy scan of your family's favourite foods, you can find healthier swaps for next time you shop.



The EasyPeasy app gives parenting helpful tips and activities, personalised for you and your 0-5 year old, from our playful community of parents and experts.



Startwell Birmingham is an NHS based programme focused on supporting child development using 8 fun characters to help parents and families.



Improving the health of children and young people. Developed by the NHS, trusted by parents. It's like a mini doctor for your child at home.



Website for families to get active and eat well. Lots of recipes, activity and healthy weight information for the whole family.



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