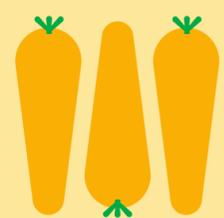


# No pressure lunchboxes

A guide to easing lunchbox pressure  
for both you and your child.

This guide considers the ups and downs of children's appetite, fussiness and learning to eat. It will help you pack a lunchbox that works for you.



Healthy Eating  
Active Living

# How much do I pack?

Packing the right amount of food can be tricky; you won't always get it right. Children's appetite and eating can go up and down- over a day, or between days. The goal is to pack enough food so your child can eat until they are satisfied but not so much that you are always wasting food. Packing too much food can overwhelm young children.



Some days the lunchbox will come home full (don't worry, your child will make up for it at other meals). If this happens regularly, pack a bit less next time.



Some days the lunchbox will come home empty and your child will complain that they didn't have enough food (they will make up for it at afternoon tea or dinner). If this happens, pack more food or more filling foods next time.

## Top 3 tips



**Pack enough food so your child can eat until they are satisfied.**



**Include mostly foods your child knows and has eaten before.**



**Provide a 'good enough' lunchbox – it doesn't need to be perfect.**

## You choose what to pack. They choose what to eat



Your role is to decide what is packed in your child's lunchbox. Offering them options (e.g. 'would you like an apple or an orange?') can help children feel in control, but the final decision on what to pack is up to you.



Your child's role is to choose what they eat from what you have provided. This helps children to build a healthy relationship with food and eat to their appetite.

I ate my sandwiches at morning tea because I was hungrier then



# What do I pack?

- ✓ Pack mostly foods your child knows and you are confident they will eat (these are called **accepted foods**). This helps to make sure children don't go hungry.
- ✓ Also try including a **new food** or one your child isn't familiar with yet. Children's diets become more varied as they get used to new foods. This usually happens after they have been offered the food a number of times (sometimes lots!).



## Including new foods

- Childcare or school can be a good place to include some 'new' foods. A different environment and eating with other children can help foods become accepted.
- If your child is starting at a new centre or school, it may be best to pack only familiar foods until your child has settled in.

## Save their favourites for home

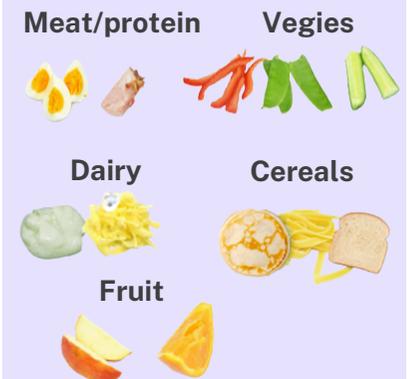
- Children don't always need a 'treat' in their lunchbox; these can be saved to eat at home.
- You may need to check the service or school nutrition policy.



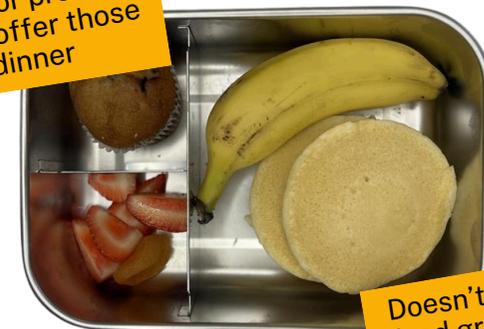
# Should I include all of the food groups?

- The lunchbox is a good opportunity to provide a variety of foods; but you don't have to include all five food groups every day.
- There are other opportunities at breakfast, dinner and on weekends to offer more variety.
- *The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating* has more detail on the five food groups.
- Use this as a guide to help you decide what to pack.
- Don't stress about how much your child eats, this is up to them.

## The five food groups



No meat or protein?  
You can offer those  
at dinner



Doesn't include all  
food groups, but is  
enough to feel full

# The 'good enough' lunchbox

...has enough food in it for your child to feel full.



No veg? You can offer this at afternoon tea.



Left over from breakfast



Lacks variety, but other food groups can be offered at dinner



Couldn't get to the shops but still includes enough filling foods

# Lunchbox savers

Frozen & canned fruit & veg can be cheaper



Buy fruit & veg in season

If brought home, use as a snack or dinner



Pack water

Use leftovers

Pack an ice brick



Buy in bulk rather than snack packs

Every child and every lunchbox is different. Don't compare.

## What else?

There are some other things to consider or ask your child:

- How many opportunities are there to eat? Morning tea, lunch... afternoon tea?
- Is there a fridge? Or do they need an ice pack?
- Can your child open their food? Have they got someone to help them?
- Your child can help you plan. Let them choose from options you decide.

When are you most hungry?

Would you like an apple or orange in your lunchbox?

Did you have enough food?

## Things to remember

### Some children...

- ✓ Have big appetites, some have small.
- ✓ Have a good variety of foods in their diet.
- ✓ Eat less variety and take longer to accept new foods.
- ✓ Eat a small breakfast and lots at school.
- ✓ Prefer to eat lots for breakfast and dinner and less at school.
- ✓ Run around or play more at lunch and eat when they get home.

## Need help?



### Are you having challenges with feeding your child?

- If your child eats a very limited diet, their accepted foods may not fit within your preschool's or school's nutrition policy. Speak with educators or teachers about working together to support your child's feeding.
- Your GP or Child & Family Health nurse can help with additional support to assist their learning to eat.

**picnic**  for parents and carers



Free 2-hour workshop and online parent support to guide you through the unpredictable and often stressful journey of feeding infants and children.

[Join PICNIC](#)

**picnic**  for Early Education staff  
in early education

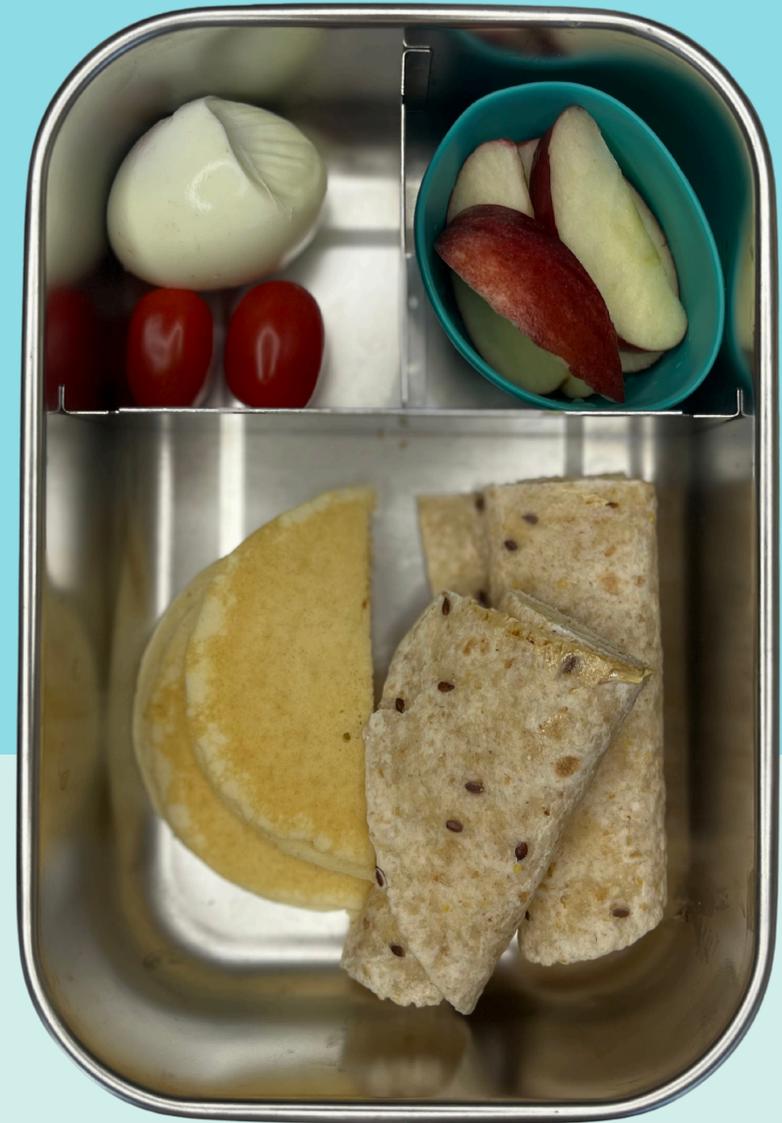


Free online self-directed learning modules and resources for early childhood education centres and staff.

[Join PICNIC EE](#)

# No pressure lunchboxes

Produced by Mid North Coast Local Health District in partnership with Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District



Healthy Eating  
Active Living

