

Packing a Lunchbox for Under 5's



Children under 5 years of age are at different development stages when it comes to eating, and are learning to accept new tastes and textures. Exposing them to a variety of different foods is important, and making sure these foods are manageable and safe. Here are some tips for packing a lunchbox for children under 5:

- Aim to include foods from the five foods groups - grains, fruit, vegetables, meat or meat alternatives and dairy.
- Avoid overloading children's lunchboxes and keep portions sizes small. Smaller finger foods are often more manageable for younger children.
 - Cut sandwiches into finger sized strips, triangles or squares.
 - Prepare fruit and veggies so they can easily be picked up and chewed. E.g. sliced cherry tomatoes, corn kernels, lightly steamed carrot, grated apple.
- Bento style lunchboxes are a great option for children who prefer their food separated.
- Check that your child can open containers and packets that will be in their lunchbox. E.g. can peel tabs on fruit and yoghurt tubs, open snack packets of crackers, and tupperware lids.
- Don't overwhelm children with lots of new foods in their lunchbox, introducing one new food at a time alongside familiar foods.

Special considerations for children under 3 years old

For children under 3 there is a higher risk of choking. It is important to be mindful of foods in lunchboxes that can be a choking risk, including:

- Hard fruit and vegetables such as apple or carrot. Swap for lightly steamed or grated fruit and veg.
- Nuts, seeds and popcorn - swap for nut or seed butters.
- Roasted chickpea or fava beans - swap for bean based dips such as hummus or white bean dip
- Tough or chewy meat, skin on sausages - swap for shredded chicken, mince, or soft slow cooked meat.
- Round foods such as grapes or cherry tomatoes - swap for sliced grapes or cherry tomatoes.



Remember food safety: Keep food cold with an ice brick or frozen water bottle.



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