Packed Lunch Ideas
use your imagination!

A packed lunch does not have to be boring - with a little imagination you could have a different sandwich for every day of the year. For the perfect balance, make sure you include foods from the 3 major food groups plus a drink:

1. A starchy food such as bread, pasta, rice or potatoes

2. A protein food such as meat, fish, eggs, beans, peas, soya products or low fat cheese

3. Some vegetables such as cherry tomatoes, carrot sticks or sweetcorn. A piece of fruit such as a banana, a box of raisins or a pot of fruit salad

4. A drink, such as fruit juice, milk or water.

Dairy foods are a good source of calcium so try to have three portions a day. For example low fat yoghurt, fromage frais or semi-skimmed milk.

Low fat dairy foods are the best choice for children over 2 years old.
Sandwiches can be made much more interesting by varying the type of bread you use, and bread can be served as it comes or toasted.

You could try:
- Wholemeal, granary, white or high fibre white bread
- Tortilla wraps or chapattis
- Crisp bread or crackers
- Rolls, panini, or bagels
- Pitta bread.

**Vegetarian ideas**

For those days when you are short of time, there are many ready-made vegetarian products in the shops that can be kept in the store cupboard and make great sandwiches in an instant, such as:
- Bean paté
- Tahini (sesame seed paste)
- Nut butters such as peanut, almond, hazel or cashew
- Hummus
- Braised tofu in a tin
- Vegan cheese i.e. Fromso
- Fake meat slices
- Alternative sliced products containing Quorn
- Falafals – (keep chilled in your fridge)
For a healthy balance, include:

**Fruit and vegetables**
Always include fruit and vegetables in a packed lunch
Try:
- Carrot sticks with a dip
- Cherry Tomatoes
- Celery sticks
- Salad leaves or cucumber in sandwiches for a fresh taste
- Fresh fruit
- Fruit Salad
- Dried fruit e.g. raisins, apricots, figs
- Fruit juice

**Meat, fish and alternatives**
Always include a protein-rich food in a packed lunch. For example:
- Lean cooked meats such as chicken or turkey
- Cheese, especially lower fat versions
- Eggs - hard boiled
- Fish - tinned tuna, sardines (drained of oil or brine)
- Pulses - home made or bought lentil or bean paté or dahl
- Hummus

**Food Safety**
Use a cool bag to keep dairy foods and meats cold and safe. For added security, a small ice pack will keep the lunch box cold all morning. Dishes containing rice are safer if cooked in advance and stored in the fridge. Keep away from direct sunlight.
Each of the four food groups

Bread, cereals and potatoes
Always include a starchy food in a packed lunch
Try:
Different types of bread e.g. wholemeal granary rolls
wholemeal pitta bread or chapatti
high fibre white bread
tortilla wraps
pillau rice
crispbread
bagels

Milk and dairy foods
For example:
Cheese spread in a sandwich
Chunks of hard cheese
Flavoured yoghurt or lassi
Plain yoghurt with added fresh fruit
Plain or flavoured milk
Raita

Safety Tips!
If you are providing chilled, freeze a carton of fruit juice the night before and it
and/or cooked meats should be refrigerated within 90 minutes of
keep for a maximum of three days.
tasty ideas!

Meat
- Cooked and sliced chicken, ham and beef
- Tinned meats such as corned beef and ham (but only occasionally as they are high in fat)

Fish
- Tinned fish such as sardines or tuna with cucumber
- Smoked fish with cream cheese (use occasionally as it can be high in salt).
- Salmon paste with peas
- Tuna with sweetcorn and low fat mayonnaise

Cheese
- Sliced low fat cheese with salad or apple or pickle or tomato
- Grated cheese with grated carrot
- Light cheese spread with either grated carrot and raisins, salad or sliced apple
- Cottage cheese with dried apricots

Egg
- Egg, hard boiled mixed with low fat salad cream
- Egg, sliced with sliced tomato, cress or salad.

Beans and Pulses
- Bean paté
- Mediterranean vegetables and beans
- Dhal in chapatti
- Chickpea chana chaat with rice
Tofu

- Smoked, braised or marinaded tofu, a little low fat mayonnaise served with either sliced tomato or mixed salad
- Smoked tofu mixed with black bean sauce, shredded spring onion, Chinese leaves and bean sprouts

Vegetarian substitute meat

- BLT – Vegetarian bacon with lettuce and tomato
- Vegetarian sausage with lettuce and sauce
- Pitta stuffed with a vegetarian frankfurter, onion and tomato sauce

Nut butter (check your school’s policy on nuts)

- Peanut or any nut butter with either bean sprouts, grated carrot and lettuce

Cashew butter

Take one 1 cup of cashew nuts, just cover with water and soak overnight; then drain off excess water and mash. Herbs can be added if desired.