Healthy food and drink choices in schools

Information for parents and carers

The school day is often busy, filled with learning and involving concentration and physical activity. Food is fuel for our bodies and healthy food provides your children with the energy and nutrients they need to get through the day.

Food from home

We recommend these five simple steps to help your children get through the day:

✓ A healthy breakfast
✓ Plenty of fruit and vegetables
✓ Dairy products – two to three serves of milk, cheese or yoghurt to meet their daily calcium needs
✓ Water – the best thirst quencher
✓ Lunch and snacks like those to the right.

Tips for packing a lunchbox

What you pack in your child’s lunchbox is really important. Try to include as many healthy foods as possible – and definitely keep junk away from school.

Avoid foods that could go off, especially on a hot day as there are no fridges at school. Take care with foods such as rice.

Packing a frozen drink or an ice brick in your child’s lunchbox will help to keep food fresh and safe to eat.

Use a thermal flask to keep food warm - rice/noodles on the top and vegetables or chicken in another compartment

Keeping your child’s lunchbox healthy and interesting can be a challenge so it’s important to find food that will stay in the lunchbox and out of the bin!

When making lunches at home we encourage parents to choose a variety of foods.

Add fresh fruit – choose fruit that is in season for example apples, oranges, grapes, mandarins and bananas.

Healthy lunch ideas

✓ sandwiches, rolls or wraps with vegemite, tuna, chicken and/or salad
✓ rice
✓ falafel
✓ hard boiled eggs
✓ lamb or chicken
✓ salad vegetables
✓ pita or lebanese bread with hommus, avocado, egg and/or salad.

Healthy snack/recess ideas

✓ rice cakes and reduced fat cream cheese
✓ fresh fruit pieces and yoghurt dip
✓ plain popcorn
✓ small tub yoghurt
✓ reduced fat cheese stick or triangle
✓ muffins with fruit
✓ English muffin with reduced fat cheese
✓ fruit bread
✓ scone – plain or fruit or pumpkin
✓ pikelets
✓ small sandwich
✓ crispbreads and spread
✓ wholemeal crackers and reduced fat cheese.

Please don’t send these foods and drinks to school

✗ chips, crisps and similar snacks
✗ high fat savoury biscuits and snacks
✗ sweet biscuits and cereal bars
✗ lollies and chocolates
✗ fruit straps
✗ cream and chocolate biscuits
✗ iced cakes and buns
✗ soft drinks and artificially sweetened drinks.
Creative recipes for lunchboxes

Perfect Pikelets
Recipe from Canteen Cuisine
Makes: 25
Traffic Light Category: Green

Ingredients:
- 2 cups self raising flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 ⅓ cups reduced fat milk
- 1 tablespoon polysaturated margarine melted or polysaturated oil

Method:
1. Sift dry ingredients into a large bowl
2. Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients and stir until smooth
3. Heat a flat non-stick sandwich press or frypan – drop small tablespoons of pikelet batter onto the sandwich press or pan and turn when bubbles rise to the surface.

Tip: This recipe is suitable to freeze.

Fruity additions –
- 1 grated unpeeled apple and 1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon
- 1 medium mashed banana or 1 grated pear
- 1 ½ cups fresh or frozen blueberries and 2 teaspoons vanilla

Note: This recipe uses self raising flour and makes ‘fluffy’ pikelets. For a traditional ‘flat’ pikelet/pancake use plain flour.

At school
Schools have a vital role to play in helping reduce the worldwide epidemic of childhood obesity. It is important to reinforce messages being taught in the classroom by modelling healthy food and drink choices in canteens and tuck shops, with class treats, on school camps and excursions.

The traffic light menu
In Western Australia, public schools follow a traffic light system to ensure a wide range of foods that make up the majority of a healthy diet are on the menu. These easy to follow signals help to plan menus full of healthy, nutritious and affordable food for your children.

The table to the right provides examples of GREEN, AMBER and RED foods for public schools. Your school will also have a policy about nuts and nut spreads.