



Packing a healthy lunchbox for kids

When children eat well they behave better, are able to listen well and concentrate for longer. With a third of a child's total food intake for the day consumed at school, packing a healthy lunchbox providing much needed nutrients, vitamins and minerals will help children to learn and play well and be happy at school.



Keep the contents of the lunch box focused around simple core foods such as bread, fruit, vegetables, dairy and meat, fish or eggs. Water should be the drink of choice. Fruit juices, cordials, flavored water and soft drinks are high in sugars and should not be consumed on a daily basis.

Many of the snack foods available in supermarkets are confusing, labeled as healthy choices, containing large amounts of sugars, salt and fat and little fibre. Ideally the snack foods you pack for your children should be less processed options such as fruit, yoghurt, cheese and crackers, or cheese sticks. However, if you do need a quick easy option, look for snack bars that are less than 500kj per serve, based on wholegrains and contain some dietary fibre, ideally more than 6g fibre per 100g.

Encourage your child to be involved in their own lunch preparation and try to set a good example with your own lunches.



Breads and cereals

Source of carbohydrate which is a major energy source for the brain and body.

Choose wholegrain varieties where possible. They are digested slower than white varieties and therefore keep children fuller for longer.

Sandwich, wrap, cracker biscuits, rice or corn cakes.



Fruit

Contains lots of vitamins and fibre. Aim to include 1–2 serves of fruit per day.

Fresh fruit placed in a container such as grapes, strawberries, pieces of banana or melon, mandarins, stonefruit. Small packets of dried fruit like sultanas or apricots. Small tubs of fruit in natural juice.



Vegetables

Good source of fibre and vitamins.

Provide vegetable pieces as a snack such as cherry tomatoes, capsicum strips, snow peas, carrot, celery or cucumber sticks. Options that won't make sandwiches go soggy include, lettuce, grated carrot, celery, capsicum and cucumber slices.



Dairy

Major source of calcium.

Include one serve in lunch box every day.

Low fat milk, cheese or yoghurt.



Lean meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts and legumes

Protein for growing bodies.

Protein will help to keep your child full and to maintain concentrations levels through the afternoon. Cold meats or chicken. Tinned fish such as salmon, tuna or sardines. Boiled eggs, baked beans or hummus.

Coasting Along

If you've been practising your breathing skills to help take your foot off the stress accelerator (Healthy Intel, November 2015), you have probably figured out that you need something to help with the big stressors.

They are the ones that keep coming back to annoy you when you are trying to get to sleep, or hoping to have a relaxing evening at the movies.

When you get to the point that the stress response keeps getting triggered, particularly if it's by the same stressor over and over again, it's time to investigate some ways that you can remove those rebounding stressors so that you can coast along at a more comfortable pace, we call this a 'coaster relaxer'.

A coaster relaxer should also be an activity that does not require alcohol or drugs as they provide an artificial effect and will only mask the stress symptoms. You also don't learn how to control your stress if you simply put a "Band-Aid" over it by relying on alcohol or drugs.

There are lots of ways that people relax. What works for you will be very personal. Essentially it can be any activity that gives you pleasure, relaxes the muscle groups, and either quiets the mind or gives the mind something more interesting to think about other than your stressor.

There are a few things to consider when choosing a coaster relaxer.

1. It should be something that you can do on a regular basis so that you can keep the accumulation of daily stress triggers down to a minimum.
2. It should be an activity that you can control yourself. If it relies on other people, situations or uncontrollable objects, you won't always be able to use it when you need it. If it can't be done when you need it, then you might actually add another stressor onto your existing stressor.
3. You should try and incorporate a couple of slow deep breaths somewhere into the activity so that it reinforces the 5 step breathing sequence you learned in *Taking the foot off the Accelerator* (Healthy Intel, November 2015).
4. It should be an activity that you are comfortable doing. There is no use choosing an activity that is meant to be a relaxing activity if it doesn't suit the way your mind and body works. Some people need quiet activities whilst others thrive with physical activities.
5. Choose an activity that is financially viable for your current situation. Whilst you may feel relaxed after a massage, if at other times it makes you worry or feel guilty about the money you are spending on your weekly massage, then it is really just replacing one stressor with another.
6. Choose an activity that fits with your lifestyle and personal responsibilities. If your coaster relaxer causes someone else's stress response to be triggered because it's a way of you avoiding responsibilities, then that will end up causing major stressors in the long run.
7. Be adaptable and willing to experiment. Try various activities to see what works well for you, and be prepared to make changes if a particular activity stops working.

Whatever coaster relaxer you choose, make sure that you keep up a regular practice of making time to use that strategy. Just like any other skill, the art of relaxation is something that we need to practice, but mastery of the skill is being able to incorporate it into everyday life in a way that benefits you both physically and mentally for a lifetime.

Ricotta Hot Cakes

Ingredients:

- ▶ 250g ricotta
- ▶ 3 eggs
- ▶ 1/4 cup milk
- ▶ 3/4 cup flour
- ▶ 3/4 tsp baking powder
- ▶ Pinch salt

Method:

Separate eggs. Add ricotta and milk to egg yolks. Sift in flour, baking powder and salt. Beat egg whites to stiff peaks and stir into mixture. Heat a lightly greased large non-stick frying pan over low heat. Cook two tablespoons of the mixture, in batches, for 3-4 minutes each side or until puffed and golden. Top with your choice of fruit, yoghurt, and/ or honey.



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