

HEALTHY LUNCHBOXES



 dietflex

 LOZ life

Childhood obesity is rapidly rising. Think back to your own school days: how many kids were overweight? Probably far fewer than the 25% of Aussie kids in 2007 – that’s one in every four kids classified as overweight or obese!

So what can we do about it? Perhaps not a lot on a population level, but we can make choices that will help our own kids.

1. Be a good and consistent role model. Kids will do what you do, not what you say.
2. Talk to your kids about healthy foods – not because they’ll “get fat” if they eat junk, but because their bodies will function better, they’ll feel better, they’ll be healthier, and they’ll do better at school. Making these sorts of conversations a normal part of the day, perhaps as part of conversation over dinner, means that there is no special emphasis placed on the information. Kids are more likely to take it on board when it’s normal.
3. Get the kids involved in meal planning. Using strict parameters, ask them what they’d like for dinner: “We can have chicken or fish tonight – which do you prefer? And which vegies do you want to have with it?”
4. Get kids involved in preparing food. Kids like to feel important and useful – and appreciated. Worry about the mess later!
5. Grow your own vegies. When kids see and understand where their food comes from, they develop more of an interest in it. If you haven’t already, start a vegie garden. From large tracts of land right down to small container planting, growing even a few edible plants helps kids to appreciate food in a different way.

WHY AVOID PROCESSED FOODS?

Many foods on supermarket shelves have marketing claims printed on the labels that suggest the food inside the package is a good choice for your kids. Be very wary of these claims.

If the food is in a package on a shelf in the supermarket, it’s manufactured to have a very long shelf-life. Processed foods also usually include flavours and colours, most of which are chemicals added to the food.

Processed foods are also often high in sugar, salt, refined carbohydrates and vegetable oils, and low in nutrients and fibre. The body digests them rapidly and so hunger strikes more quickly, with the result that we eat more of them. Of course, this is great for the manufacturers but not so good for our health.

Think about the packaging of foods which are marketed to kids. They’re usually brightly coloured and have cute little cartoon characters on them. Kids see the product and want it – not because of the food inside the package but because the packaging is appealing. The test would be whether the kids still wanted the food if it came in brown paper packaging?

BUT I DON’T HAVE TIME

There are many excuses given for why people buy processed foods. The reality is, home-made food is not hard, it’s not time-consuming, and kids will eat it if parents don’t cave in and offer the junk their kids ask for.

Home-made food is best because you know exactly what is in the food. There’s no need to read confusing labels with dubious nutrition claims. You don’t need to wonder or guess or hope that you’re feeding your kids properly.

In a busy lifestyle, how do you make time for homemade lunches?

1. Be organised. Plan ahead what you're going to cook and prepare, write a shopping list so you don't forget anything, and do the shopping.
2. Get the kids to help plan their lunches but ensure you have strict guidelines as to what is acceptable and what is not. If you allow kids to make the food decisions, you may find your shopping list full of chips, soft drinks and cakes.
3. Prepare lunches the night before while dinner is cooking. Alternatively, have a cook-up at the weekend to ensure lunches are ready to grab each morning from the freezer.

So the question is; "What goes into a healthy lunchbox?"

1. Fresh food - not fresh out of a package, but fresh out of your oven, fresh off the tree, fresh from the greengrocer.
2. A variety of macronutrients - some protein, some carbohydrate and some fat. Many kids take lunches which are almost exclusively carbohydrate - for example a sandwich, a bag of chips, and an apple.
3. Water. Every evening, pop water in a BPA-free bottle into the freezer so you can send your kids off to school with a frozen water bottle. They can then re-fill it from the school taps during the day.
4. It must taste good. It doesn't matter how healthy the food is if the kids don't eat it.

So let's now look at some ideas for healthy lunchboxes. Remember that these are just ideas to get you started.

	MORNING TEA	LUNCH	AFTERNOON TEA
MON	Apple and cheese	Rice paper wrap with ham, avocado, lettuce, carrot, bean sprouts and cucumber. Peach	Chocolate cup cakes (see recipe)
TUE	Vita wheat with butter and vegemite	Pita pocket with chicken, mayonnaise, alfalfa, baby spinach and capsicum. Banana	Fruit jellies (see recipe)
WED	Celery sticks with cream cheese and sultanas	Boiled egg, snow peas, cherry tomatoes and corn cob. Watermelon	Banana pancakes (see recipe)
THU	Vegie sticks with hummus	Lettuce leaves wrapped around smoked salmon, cream cheese, cucumber and green beans. Mandarin	Fruit salad with Greek yoghurt
FRI	Pretzel sticks with cheese and cabana	Frittate muffins (see recipe)	Mini meatballs (see recipe) with sauce

HEALTHY LUNCHBOX RECIPES

FRITTATA MUFFINS - makes 12

2 Tbsp coconut oil

6 eggs

1/2 onion, diced

1/4 cup cream

3 rashers bacon, diced

1/2 cup grated tasty cheese

1 cup grated or chopped vegies eg carrot, zucchini, capsicum, turnip

1. Preheat oven to 180°C. Heat oil in a skillet over medium heat and fry onion for 6 minutes.
2. Add bacon and fry for 4 minutes.
3. Add vegetables and fry for 2 minutes.
4. Whisk eggs and cream, add cheese, add vegetable mixture and stir to combine. Transfer to a 12-hole muffin pan and bake for 15 to 20 minutes or until golden brown.

MEATBALLS - makes a lot!

1kg beef mince

1 tsp salt

500g pork mince

1 tsp black pepper

2 cloves garlic, minced

3 eggs

3 Tbsp chopped fresh parsley

1. Preheat oven to 180°C. Line a baking tray with baking paper.
2. Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and mix well with your hands. Roll the mixture into balls about the size of a walnut, and bake for about 15 to 20 minutes or until browned.

PANCAKES - serves 1

1 1/2 scoops protein powder

Water

1 tsp melted butter Sliced banana

1 drop vanilla essence Whipped cream

1. Combine protein powder, melted butter and essence (optional). Add a little water slowly while mixing to make a thick batter.
2. Melt a little butter in a pan and drop the batter mix into the melted butter and let it cook till it bubbles. Flip over with a fish slice and cook on the other side. Eat cold, or while still hot with sliced banana and a dollop of whipped cream if desired.

CHOCOLATE CUP CAKES - makes about 15 cup cakes

3 cups almond meal

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup cacao powder

2 tsp baking powder

1 cup coconut milk

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup coconut oil

1 Tbsp vanilla extract

2 eggs

Frosting:

1 large avocado,
peeled, seeded

2 tsp vanilla extract

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup cacao powder

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey

2 eggs

Desiccated coconut

1. Preheat oven to 175°C. In a large bowl, combine the almond meal, cacao and baking powder. Add the coconut milk, honey, coconut oil, vanilla and eggs and mix well until combined.
2. Pour into cup cake cases and bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until the centre is still a bit moist.
3. To make the icing, combine the avocado, vanilla, cacao powder and honey in a blender and process until smooth and creamy. Spread over the cooled cup cakes and garnish with shredded or desiccated coconut.

FRUIT JELLIES - makes 8 servings

4 Tbsp water

1 cups frozen raspberries

5 tsp gelatine powder

2 cups coconut yoghurt (opt)

6 cups coconut water

Extra 250g fresh raspberries,

4 Tbsp lime juice to serve

1. Place the water and gelatine in a bowl and whisk with a fork until dissolved. Set aside for around 5 minutes.
2. Place the coconut water, lime juice, and frozen raspberries in a medium saucepan, over medium heat. Bring to a simmer and cook for 1 minute.
3. Remove from the heat, add the gelatine mixture and stir until combined.
4. Blend until smooth, using a stick blender and then strain the mixture through a sieve. Remove any foam and set aside to cool for around 20 minutes.
5. Divide the cooled jelly mixture between 8 small cups or bowls, and refrigerate for 3 hours, or until set.
6. Serve with an optional extra of coconut yoghurt and top with fresh raspberries.

