

## **Back to School and School Lunches**

Hello There!

It's that time of year again, preparations for the return to school are underway in a lot of households around the country. Uniforms are being organised and books are getting covered! You might be groaning at the prospect of making lunches again, but you know what, this is an opportunity to help you keep your kids and teens on the straight and narrow with healthy eating! Make it fun though and include food that they will eat and enjoy! Some children and teenagers might be a bit anxious about returning to school after the unusual and challenging year that we have all had, so getting them involved in/making their own lunches will give them a bit of routine and 'a bit of normal'.

### **Planning**

The first thing to do is prepare a lunch box planner so that you can include this in your weekly shopping. Buy fruit and veg that are easy to pack in the box like kid-sized apples and bananas, (less chance of them getting squashed in school bags!), mandarins, kiwis, grapes\*, cherry tomatoes\* cucumber chunks, carrot & celery sticks. Buy wholemeal bread rolls, wholemeal crackers, wholemeal wraps.

Low-fat grated cheddar cheese is great for sprinkling on left-over pasta in a pasta salad or to include in mini wraps. Sliced chicken and turkey are handy for sandwiches. Peanut butter/nut butter is good on wholemeal crackers for 'little break' in the morning. You can get lots of other ideas for healthy lunchboxes here <https://www2.hse.ie/file-library/health-eating-active-living/healthy-lunchboxes.pdf>

**\*Grapes, cherry tomatoes and other similar-sized food can choke your child. Grapes are a particular risk to children. Cut them in half and then quarters lengthways or smaller. Remove all seeds or pips. Cut cherry tomatoes and other similar-sized food in the same way.**

## **Tooth friendly drinks**

Milk and water are the best tooth friendly drinks. The School Milk Scheme is an EU-subsidised programme run by the National Dairy Council which provides a carton of milk daily to every child registered in participating schools. Milk is very important for healthy growth and is a natural source of vitamin B2, B12, protein, calcium (for strong teeth and bones) and iodine and this programme ensures that children get one of their recommended portions of dairy each day.

## **Brush those teeth!**

A nice fresh and zingy mouth is also a good start to the school day so make sure the teeth are brushed before they head out the door! It's important that hands are washed **before and after brushing** to reduce the spread of COVID19. 2-7 year olds require help brushing their teeth, over the age of 7 they can start to brush their own, but make sure they spit out the toothpaste, for more information see our website:

<https://www.dentalhealth.ie/your-oral-health/children/>

## **Wash the lunchbox!**

Hard surfaces are a significant risk for the transmission and spreading of COVID-19, as the virus survives longer on hard surfaces. This can include lunchboxes and reusable drink bottles, so it is recommended labelling and washing them daily to help stop the spread of infection. Giving your child little jobs to do makes them feel independent, so get them to take their lunchbox/water bottle out of their schoolbag for washing as soon as they come home.

*We hope you find these tips helpful to get you going on your preparations for the school year. We have lots of other information available on our website so check out [www.dentalhealth.ie](http://www.dentalhealth.ie)*

*Enjoy the rest of your Summer!*