



Pippins Lunch Box Tips



A Balance of Food

Research confirms that healthy eating habits in the years before school are vitally important because they influence growth, development and academic achievement in later life. A healthy balanced diet for children aged one to five years is based on the four food groups listed below, which provide a range of essential nutrients that children need to grow and develop.

- Starchy foods
- Fruit and vegetables
- Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein
- Milk and dairy foods



Eating a wider range of different foods provides a better balance of nutrients.

Portion Size

A child's stomach is only the size of their own closed fist and so they need to eat smaller portions of food more often. At Pippins the children are given two healthy snacks a day and so it is important not to overload their lunchbox with too much food, which can be overwhelming for the child and lead them to filling up on one type of food and have no appetite for the rest of their meal which would provide them with that important balance of nutrients they need. A typical portion is different for each child depending on their size, metabolism and level of activity but as a general guide for children of preschool age portions recommended by the School Food Trust are;

Starchy Foods	1 slice of bread 1-2 crackers 3-4 tablespoons of pasta or noodles
Fruit and Vegetables	1-2 tablespoons of cooked vegetables 4-6 raw vegetable sticks 1-2 tablespoons of berries ½ a large piece of fruit (like an apple)
Meat, fish, eggs, beans	1-2 tablespoons of chopped meat or fish 1 egg 2-3 tablespoons of beans
Milk and dairy	1-2 tablespoons of grated hard cheese A small pot (60g) of unsweetened yoghurt 3-4 tablespoons of low sugar custard or rice pudding

A Good Relationship with Food



It is so important that children develop a good relationship with food as this will last throughout their whole life. At Pippins we know the importance of making lunch a pressure free, social occasion. Staff eat with the children and act as role models eating healthy lunches and making positive comments whenever appropriate. This atmosphere of positive interaction with food that we try to create means that children are free to eat their food in any order they choose and because of this at Pippins we would prefer if sweets and treats aren't put in the children's lunch boxes as we don't want them filling up on them and leaving the more nutritious elements. Children will be encouraged to try all aspects of

their lunchbox but will never be forced to finish food unwillingly as it is vital that children learn to understand their own appetites.

Try, Try and Try Again

Children often need to try a food several times before they like it. It is a good idea to keep letting children try new foods as part of a meal (along with other aspects they enjoy, we don't want them to be hungry,) without putting any pressure on them to finish it, just trying the food is an achievement and you may be surprised one day when they decide they like it.



Change 4 life

The Change 4 life website run by the NHS (www.nhs.uk/change4life) has some really useful advice on nutrition and also lots of fantastic healthy recipes including loads of lunchbox ideas.



There is surprising information on how much sugar is in some foods, such as certain yoghurts or juice drinks, and the website gives easy ideas on how to swap these foods that are high in sugar for low sugar alternatives whilst still giving your child something they will enjoy.

There are also lots of good tips on how to boost the fruit and vegetables your child eats so that they get their 5 A Day, such as adding fresh or dried fruit to their cereal in the morning. This is so important as fruit and vegetables are a great source of vitamins, minerals and fibre, and are an important part of a healthy, balanced diet.

If you have any questions about any of this please let us know.