



Planning nutritious school meals

WITH uniforms that need to be ironed and homework to be checked, planning nutritious lunch box meals can be irksome, especially if the last few lunches you prepared were returned untouched by your child.

Registered dietician and Association for Dietetics in South Africa (Adsa) spokesperson Zekia Ackerman has put together a guide to assist parents with preparing healthy and nutritious school meals.

According to Ackerman, lunch box meals need to be balanced and suggests packing

foods from at least two different groups for a snack time, and food from at least three groups for a meal. These are the food groups that you can choose from:

Vegetables
Fruit
Dairy
Grains and starches
Meat and meat alternatives
Healthy oils
Water

The ideal food groups to pack for a snack time are fruit, vegetables and dairy. For a meal, the ideal groups are grains and starches, a meat alternative, vegetables and healthy oils. Always pack water and avoid sweet drinks.



	5-8 yrs (Snack)	9-13 yrs (Snack)	9-13 yrs (Lunch)
Meal 1	100g tub plain low fat yogurt 12 almonds 10 green and purple grapes 3 dried apple rings	100g tub plain low fat yogurt 17 almonds 20 green and purple grapes 1 baked apple rings	1 low GI whole wheat bread sandwich with peanut butter and apple slices
Meal 2	2 provitas 1 cheese block 1 cup strawberries 5 cucumber slices	4 provitas 1 cheese block 2 cups strawberries 30 cucumber slices	2 cups rice salad (rice, chickpeas and mixed salad with sun-dried tomatoes)
Meal 3	5 corn on the cob wheels 2 dried peaches 2 small homemade muffins* 1 plum 4 baby carrots	5 corn on the cob wheels 8 baby tomatoes 2 small homemade muffins* 2 plums 8 baby carrots	1 1/2 cup whole wheat macaroni and salad (beans salad)
Meal 4			1 low GI whole wheat roll with mixed salad and mayonnaise

LUNCH BOX MEALS FOR BUSY PARENTS

INTERNET pictures for healthy lunch-boxes look delicious, but for busy parents, are impossible to make. Working parents often do not have the time to stand in the kitchen for hours to make funny face sandwiches or fancy shaped fruit and vegetables.



If you are a busy parent, try to use some of the leftover items from supper to make a salad that can be packed in the evening. Also, buy items that can easily be packed without

needing to be cut for days when supper leftovers are unusable. Muffins can be made in advance and frozen. By break time it should be defrosted. Avoid muffin mixes as they are high in sugar.



LUNCHBOX MEALS THAT WILL MAKE YOUR CHILD FORGET ABOUT THE TEMPTING TREATS AT THE TUCK SHOP

KIDS love colour, variety and surprises. They don't like discoloured food, wet sandwiches or squashed food items. They hate a lunchbox that has a smell that's caused all their friends to turn their heads to see where the awful smell came from.

Avoid foods with a strong odour like fish, eggs, broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage for lunchboxes. Keep these items for meals at home.

Most kids will also rather eat sliced fruit than whole fruit. They want food that can be eaten quickly and easily so that they have more time to play.

Therefore, make sure that the lunchbox items



that you choose can withstand the handling and shaking in a school bag. Individual tubs for different items work well. Slice fruit in the morning and pack in small airtight containers. Sprinkle apples with lemon juice immediately after slicing. You may rinse it or dry it with a paper towel after a minute. If your child regularly



makes comments about their friends getting nicer food at the tuck shop, find out what their favourite healthy foods are and be sure to pack those. You

	5-8 yrs (Snack)	9-13 yrs (Snack)	9-13 yrs (Lunch)
Meal 1	1/2 homemade cereal bar 1 kiwi fruit (sliced) 1/2 cup julienne carrots	1 homemade cereal bar 2 kiwi fruit (sliced) 1/2 cup julienne carrots	1 small whole wheat seeded rolls with cottage cheese and cucumber
Meal 2	2 mini tomato and mozzarella cheese kebabs 1/2 cup vegetable crisps 1/2 cup green and orange melon balls	3 mini tomato and mozzarella cheese kebabs 1 1/2 cup vegetable crisps 1 1/2 cup green and orange melon balls	2 cups whole wheat pasta salad with chickpeas, butter nut and a touch of feta
Meal 3	1/4 cup homemade popcorn 30 red grapes 6 cucumber sticks	1 1/2 cup homemade popcorn 30 red grapes 6 cucumber sticks	Toasted sandwich (low GI whole wheat bread) with tomato and mozzarella cheese
Meal 4	200ml home made smoothie (strawberry and yogurt or mango and ice) 4 Thai peanuts and raisins 4 carrot sticks	300ml home made smoothie (strawberry and yogurt or mango and ice) 4 Thai peanuts and raisins 8 carrot sticks	

and occasionally pack a healthier version or a similar food. Try the above meal options.

LUNCH BOX MEALS FOR EXAM/TEST WEEK



NUTRITION has a direct influence on your child's brain function as it provides the building blocks needed for optimal brain function. During exam/test week, your child needs optimal concentration and memory. Apart from adequate sleep, normal blood sugar levels help your child's brain to perform at its best. Make sure your child starts the day by eating a balanced breakfast and also choose foods with a low glycaemic index to keep blood sugar levels steady for the rest of the day. This enhances the quality and duration of intellectual performance. Key nutrients for brain function are omega-3 fatty acids, iodine, iron, zinc and choline.



Omega-3 fatty acids, DHA and EPA, are important for the structure and function of your child's brain. They affect the neurotransmitter dopamine in the frontal brain where higher cognitive functions are controlled. Zinc plays an important role in attention. Choline is part of a neurotransmitter that is involved in memory. Folic acid and vitamin B12 are important nutrients that boost your child's memory. Although fish is not ideal to pack in a lunch box, be sure to give your children oily fish like salmon, sardines, pilchards or mackerel twice a week for supper to give them all the omega-3s and iodine they need. Use iodised salt in cooking and make sure that your child always eats a healthy balanced diet that includes a variety of foods from all the food groups, not only during exam time. Chicken liver pate is high in iron, zinc, choline,

	5-8 yrs (Snack)	9-13 yrs (Snack)	9-13 yrs (Lunch)
Meal 1	2 Provitas with chicken liver pate 1 nectarine 2 baby spinach and strawberry kebabs	4 Provitas with chicken liver pate 2 nectarines 2 baby spinach and strawberry kebabs	Whole Wheat pasta salad with rice tomatoes, chickpeas and fat free cottage cheese
Meal 2	100g tub plain low fat yogurt 2 1/2 mixed nuts 1/2 cup mango cubes	100g tub plain low fat yogurt 2 1/2 mixed nuts 1 cup mango cubes	Pearl barley salad with four bean mix and colourful mixed salad
Meal 1	1/2 cup popcorn 1/2 cup plain lowfat yogurt with fresh strawberry puree 1 apple (sliced)	1 1/2 cup popcorn 1/2 cup plain lowfat yogurt with fresh strawberry puree 1 apple (sliced)	Sandwich with peanut butter and green grapes
Meal 2	1 packet trail mix 1 small banana 2 peaches	1 packet trail mix 1 banana 4 peaches	2 small whole wheat seeded rolls with cheese 1 nectarine and 1 plum

they need. Use iodised salt in cooking and make sure that your child always eats a healthy balanced diet that includes a variety of foods from all the food groups, not only during exam time. Chicken liver pate is high in iron, zinc, choline, folic acid and vitamin B12. Nuts are high in omega-3 fatty acids and zinc. Spinach is high in iron and folic acid and the vitamin C in strawberries assist in the absorption of the iron in spinach. Dairy products also contain iodine.