



03 Food safety and nutrition

03.02 Lunchboxes

Parents/carers are asked to provide a healthy, balanced lunchbox if their child is staying for a lunch session.

General

Children have different nutritional requirements to adults. They need to be fed a healthy balanced diet with a range of foods. NHS guidelines suggest that a balanced lunchbox will contain something from each of the following groups:

- a starchy food such as bread, pasta or rice
- a protein source such as meat, fish, egg or beans
- a source of calcium such as yoghurt, cheese or milk
- fresh vegetables or salad
- fruit (including fresh fruit juice and dried fruit).

Allergens

Parents/carers are asked not to put any nuts or use peanut butter in their child's lunch box as even the smell can affect children with nut allergies. Lunch bags should be clearly named so that the risk of cross contamination of allergens is reduced. If any items are found to contain nuts or allergens, they will be removed from the lunchbox and sent home in a clear plastic bag and information slip.

Choking hazards

Parents/carers should ensure the food provided is suitable for their child's individual developmental needs and prepared in a way to prevent choking. Staff will not cut or prepare food provided in lunchboxes and items will be removed and returned home if deemed to be a choking hazard. Parents/carers should follow FSA guidelines.

Food safety and hygiene

Perishable items should be kept cool and kept in insulated sealed bags with cool packs, otherwise only food that is safely stored at room temperature should be packed.

Portion Control

Staff will do their best to encourage children to eat their lunch, but children often have more than they need in their lunchbox. Parents/carers should aim to provide no more than 4 or 5 items. All uneaten food will be placed back inside lunchboxes.

Healthy Eating:

Children are encouraged to eat savoury items before other food, but this will not be enforced. Chocolate bars, sweets or other confectionery should not be put in lunchboxes. If these items are packed, they will be removed and sent home in a clear plastic bag and information slip.

Further guidance

[Eatwell Guide](#)

DfE's help for early years providers website has a poster on the 4 food groups

[Eat Better, Start Better \(Action for Children 207\) www.foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/](#)

[FSA Choking Hazards](#)

[Allergen information for loose foods \(Food Standards Agency 2017\)](#)

www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/loosefoodsleaflet.pdf

Food allergy/anaphylaxis guidance <https://www.bsaci.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/BSACIAllergyActionPlan2018NoAAI2981-2.pdf>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/anaphylaxis/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/food-allergy/>