A balanced packed lunch should contain:

* Starchy foods. These are bread, rice, potatoes and pasta, and others.
* Protein foods. These are meat, fish, eggs, beans and others.
* A dairy item. This could be cheese or yoghurt.
* Vegetables or salad, and a portion of fruit.

Starchy foods are a good source of energy, and should make up a third of the lunchbox. But don’t let things get boring. Instead of sandwiches give kids bagels, pitta bread, wraps and baguettes. Use brown, wholemeal or seeded bread, not white bread.

Get ideas for healthy [starchy foods](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/starchy-foods.aspx).

Children often like food they can eat with their fingers, so chop up raw veggies such as carrots or peppers, and give them houmous or cottage cheese to dip the veggies in. Breadsticks and wholemeal crackers are great finger foods and they can be spread with low-fat soft cheese or eaten with reduced-fat cheddar and pickles.

Replace chocolate bars and cakes with fresh fruit, dried fruit or unsalted nuts. Vary the fruit each day and get them to try new things, like kiwi or melon.

You could also make up a tasty fruit salad.

Be inventive and encourage your children when they try something new.