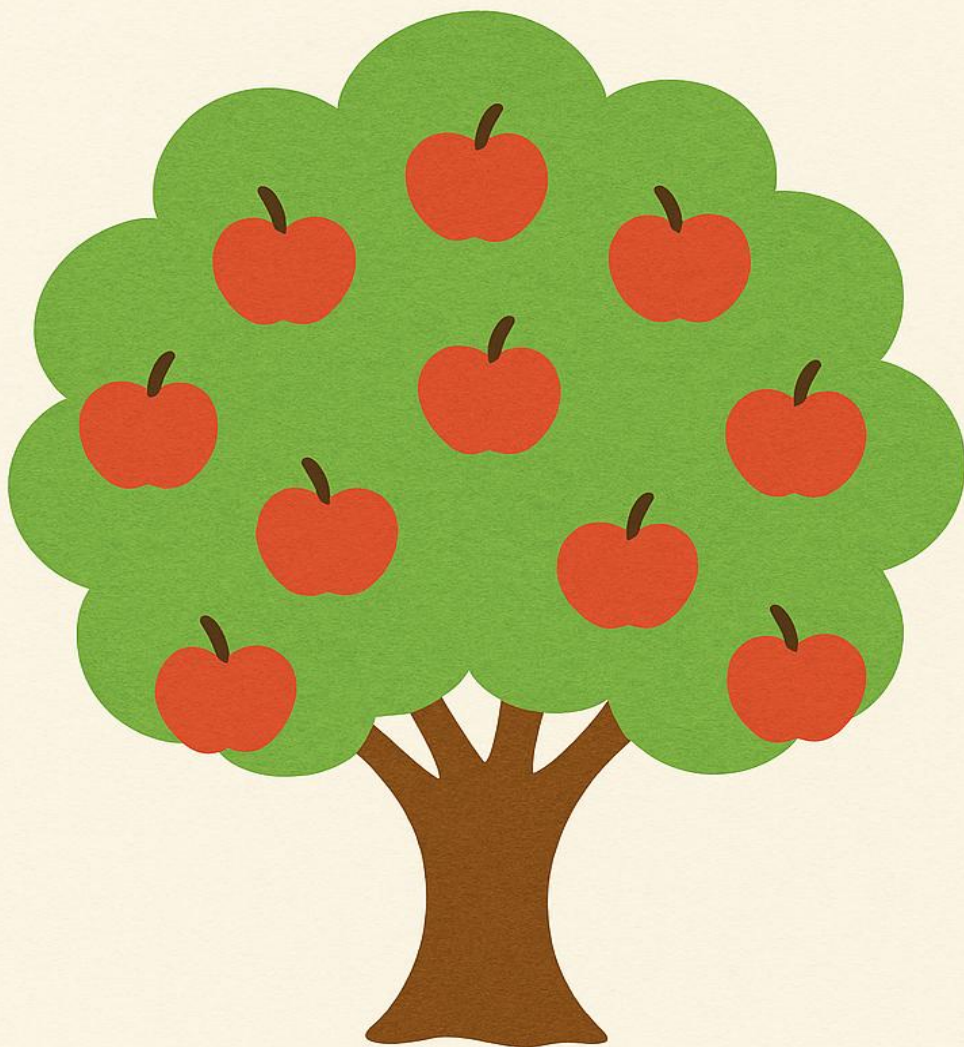


Healthy Lunchboxes at Our Nursery



Emneth Nursery and Daycare

Healthy Lunchboxes at Our Nursery

At Emneth Nursery School, we are committed to promoting healthy eating habits from an early age. A well-balanced lunchbox helps children stay energised, focused and ready to learn throughout the day. We encourage families to provide nutritious meals with appropriate portion sizes that support children's growth without creating unnecessary food waste.

We also ask that, wherever possible, lunchboxes include items with minimal packaging. Reducing single-use plastics and waste not only helps our environment but also teaches children the importance of looking after the world around them. By working together, we can ensure that every child enjoys a healthy, sustainable, and enjoyable lunchtime experience.

Key principles of eating well for under 5's

Offering a good variety of foods helps children get all the nutrients they need to grow and stay healthy. Try to include different items in packed lunches and change them up from day to day so children enjoy a balanced and interesting range of foods.

Choose foods that give young children lots of nourishment in small amounts. Little ones don't eat big portions, so offering foods that are naturally rich in nutrients helps support their growth and development. The best choices are simple foods that are

Encourage children to drink tap water whenever they're thirsty, and make sure fresh water is always available. Water is the best choice for keeping children hydrated—it quenches thirst, doesn't fill them up before meals, and is kind to their teeth. Unlike sugary or artificially sweetened drinks, water helps support healthy habits from an early age.



Young children need child-sized portions of at least five different fruits and vegetables each day to help them grow and stay healthy. Did you know? It can take lots of tries—sometimes 8 to 10 times or more—before a child accepts a new vegetable. Keep offering small tastes regularly, even if they don't seem keen at first. This helps build healthy eating habits over time

Try to keep sugary foods and drinks to a minimum. Children don't need sweets, biscuits, cakes, chocolate or sugary drinks for energy. These foods can harm teeth and add calories without providing the important nutrients children need.

Starchy foods like potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and yam are much better sources of energy because they also contain nutrients that help children grow.

You can use fresh fruit to naturally sweeten yoghurts and desserts.

Did you know? Many commercial baby foods and drinks — including fruit purées — can be surprisingly high in sugar, even when they're marketed as 'healthy'. It's best to limit these where possible and choose simple, less processed options instead

Parents must ensure that all food sent into nursery is cut and prepared in line with national safety guidelines to reduce the risk of choking. Please make sure foods such as grapes, cherry tomatoes and sausages are cut lengthways, and that any hard or round foods are prepared safely before being packed.

What should go into a packed lunch?

1 or 2 portions of STARCHY FOOD	1 portion of PROTEIN FOOD: meat, fish. Eggs, lentils or other alternatives.	At least 1 portion of VEGETABLES	At least 1 portion of FRUIT	At least 1 portion of MILK OR DAIRY FOODS, or alternatives
For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bread or rolls • Bagel • Tortilla or wrap • Pitta bread • Chapatti • Cooked potato • Pasta • Noodles • Rice • Couscous • Polenta or other grains • Fruit bun • Malt loaf • Raisin bread 	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicken • Turkey • Beef • Lamb • Pork • Tuna • Salmon • Egg • Houmous or other pulses and beans • Dahl or other lentil dishes • Seed spreads • Tofu 	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cucumber • Carrots • Tomatoes • Red or green peppers • Sweetcorn • Mixed salad • Green beans • Sugar snap peas • Peas 	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apple • Pear • Banana • Clementine • Strawberries • Grapes • Melon • Canned fruit 	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk to drink (Pasteurised whole or semi-skinned cows'. Goats' or sheep's milk • Plant-based milk alternatives (Unsweetened calcium-fortified oat, soya, pea, coconut or almond milk • Dairy foods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan yoghurt Plain fromage frais Cheese Rice pudding Semolina Pudding

Eating well for vegan infants and under-5s, provides information, recipes and portion size information as well as practical advice relevant to all infants and children on eating well. It is available at: www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-resources

Packed Lunch Storage

Please note that we do not have fridge space available for storing all children's packed lunches. To keep food safe and at an appropriate temperature throughout the day, we ask that all lunchboxes include an ice pack or cooling block. This helps ensure your child's food stays fresh and safe to eat until lunchtime.

Portion Control Guidance

Under 2 Years

Protein	1–2 tbsp (e.g., shredded chicken, beans, egg)
Carbs	¼–½ slice bread or 2–3 tbsp cooked pasta/rice
Fruit & Veg	1–2 tbsp soft fruit or cooked veg
Dairy	Small cube of cheese or 2–3 tbsp yogurt
Tip	Avoid choking hazards. Cut food into small pieces.

2–3 Years

Protein	2–3 tbsp (e.g., turkey slices, hummus, boiled egg)
Carbs	½ slice bread or 3–4 tbsp pasta/rice
Fruit & Veg	2–3 tbsp of each
Dairy	½ small pot yogurt or thin slice of cheese
Tip	Offer variety—small amounts of different foods.

3–4 Years

Protein	3–4 tbsp (e.g., lean meat, beans, egg)
Carbs	½–1 slice bread or 4–5 tbsp pasta/rice
Fruit & Veg	3–4 tbsp of each
Dairy	½–1 small pot yogurt or slice of cheese
Tip	Encourage self-feeding and balanced choices.

Early years food choking hazards



Below is a table of advice on key foods for care givers who are involved with preparing and serving food for babies and young children (under 5 years old)

Vegetable and fruits	Advice
Pips or stones in fruit	Always check beforehand and remove hard pips or stones from fruit.
Small fruits	Cut small round fruits like grapes, cherries, berries, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, into small pieces: cut lengthways and then again cut them in halves (quarters).
Large fruits and firm fruits	Cut large fruits like melon and firm fruits like apple into slices instead of small chunks. For very young children, consider grating or mashing firm fruits, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Vegetables	Cut vegetables like carrots, cucumber and celery into narrow batons. For very young children consider grating or mashing firm vegetables and legumes like butter beans, chickpeas and tofu, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Skin on fruit and vegetables	Consider removing the skin from fruit and vegetables, especially for very young children. Peeled fruit and vegetables can be swallowed more easily.
Cooking fruit and vegetables	Consider softening firm fruit and vegetables (such as carrots, broccoli, yam and apples) by steaming or simmering until soft. Serve cut into slices or narrow batons.
Meat and fish	Advice
Sausages and hot dogs	Cut sausages and hot dogs into short strips. Cut them in half and then lengthways or as thinly as possible. Peeling the skin off the sausages helps them to be swallowed more easily.
Meat or fish	Remove bones from meat or fish. Cut meat into strips as thinly as possible. Remove skin and fat from meat and fish, it will help the food pass smoothly down the throat.
Cheese	Advice
Grate or cut cheese	Grate or cut cheese into short strips. Cut lumps of cheese as narrow as possible.
Nuts and seeds	Advice
Chop or flake whole nuts	Chop or flake whole nuts, peanuts and seeds. Whole nuts should not be given to children under five years old.
Bread	Advice
White bread and other breads	White bread can form a ball shape with a dough-like texture at the back of a child's throat, if not chewed properly. Brown bread or toasted white bread are good alternatives. Cut bread, chapatis, naan bread and other breads into narrow strips.
Snacks and other foods	Advice
Popcorn	Do not give babies and young children popcorn.
Chewing gum and marshmallows	Do not give babies and young children chewing gum or marshmallows.
Peanut butter	Do not give babies and young children peanut butter on its own, only use as a spread.
Jelly cubes	Do not give babies and young children raw jelly cubes.
Boiled sweets and ice cubes	Do not give babies and young children boiled, hard, gooey, sticky or cough sweets, or ice cubes.
Raisins and other dried fruits	Do not give babies under the age of 1 whole raisins or dried fruits. Cut them into small pieces.

Make sure food is prepared appropriately for children under 5 years old, see: <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/>
 It is also advisable that care givers are familiar with how to respond to a choking incident, see: How to stop a child from choking: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-stop-a-child-from-choking/>
 and How to resuscitate a child: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-resuscitate-a-child/>

Pitta bread with houmous and carrot, banana and milk drink



- 1 pitta bread (60g)
- 1 falafel (25g)
- 1 heaped tablespoon houmous (60g)
(See recipe below.)
- 4 carrot sticks (40g)
- 1 banana
- 150ml full fat or semi-skimmed milk, or
a suitable plant-based milk alternative

RECIPE

Houmous

This recipe makes 4 portions of about 60g.

- 1 large can (400g) chickpeas, drained
(240g drained weight)
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic paste
- 1 tablespoon (30g) tahini (sesame seed
spread)
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon water

1. Place all the ingredients in a blender and blitz to the desired consistency. Houmous can be smooth or lumpy.
2. If you don't have a blender, you can mash the ingredients together with a fork.

Tuna and sweetcorn pasta, red pepper, celery, malt loaf and melon



Check that the pasta is egg-free.



- 3-4 tablespoons tuna and sweetcorn
pasta (165g) (See recipe below.)
- 4 strips red pepper (30g)
- 3 sticks celery (30g)
- 1 slice fruited malt bread (35g)
- 1/8 melon, cubed (50g)

RECIPE

Tuna and sweetcorn pasta

This recipe makes 4 portions of about 165g.

- 120g dried pasta, boiled until tender
- 4 tablespoons sweetcorn canned in
water (120g)
- 1 can (160g) tuna in brine, drained
(drained weight 120g)
- 2 tablespoons medium fat soft cheese
(80g)

1. Boil the pasta, following the instructions on the packet.
2. When cooked, drain the pasta and immediately toss it with all the other ingredients until well mixed.

**Egg roll, cucumber and tomato,
and yoghurt and blueberries**



- 1 brown roll (60g)
- 1 boiled egg (60g), mashed with 1 teaspoon vegetable fat spread
- 4 sticks of cucumber (30g)
- 3 cherry tomatoes, cut into quarters (30g)
- 2 tablespoons whole-milk yoghurt (60g)
- 1 handful blueberries (40g)



**Chicken, pasta, red pepper,
lettuce, kiwi and milk drink**



Check that the pasta is egg-free.



- 3 tablespoons cooked pasta shapes (about 30g dried pasta)
- Meat from half of a chicken thigh, cooked and cut into pieces (40g)
- 1/4 red pepper, washed and cut into chunks or slices
- 2 leaves crispy lettuce, sliced
- 1 kiwi fruit, peeled and cut into slices or chunks
- 100ml full fat or semi-skimmed milk, or a suitable plant-based milk alternative



Chicken tortilla, carrot and green pepper sticks, satsuma segments and Greek yoghurt

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- 1/4 cooked breast of chicken (40g), cut into strips
- 1/8 cucumber, cut into thin strips
- 1 tortilla or wrap
- 3 baby carrots (40g), topped and tailed, washed, and cut in half lengthways
- 1/4 green pepper, washed and cut into sticks
- 1 satsuma or clementine, divided into segments
- 1 large tablespoon (40g) Greek yoghurt



Rice and peas, jerk chicken, sweetcorn, tomatoes and mango

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- 3 tablespoons rice and peas (100g) (See recipe below.)
- 40g jerk chicken
- 4 baby sweetcorn, steamed and cut in half (50g)
- 3 cherry tomatoes, quartered (30g)
- 1/4 mango, cut in cubes or slices (50g)

RECIPE

Rice and peas

This recipe makes 4 portions of about 100g.

- 5 tablespoons water (150ml)
- 100ml coconut milk (1/4 of a 400ml can)
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 4 tablespoons dried white rice (120g)
- 4 tablespoons drained red kidney beans (100g)



1. Mix the water with the coconut milk and dried thyme, and add the rice.
2. Bring the mixture to the boil and then simmer for 15 minutes, stirring regularly until the rice is tender.
3. Add the kidney beans and stir well.

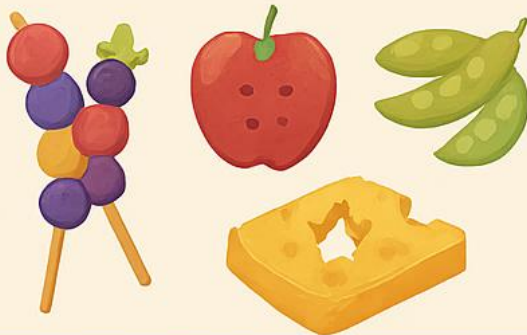


Fun & Healthy Lunchbox Ideas!



Super-Fun Sandwiches

- Cut sandwiches into stars, hearts, animals, or puzzle pieces
- Try wrap pinwheels for a fun twist
- Use colourful fillings like beetroot hummus or grated carrot



Veggie Adventures

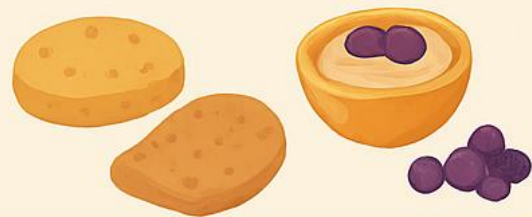
- Pack carrot, cucumber, or pepper sticks
- Create a “build-your-own” veggie pot with hummus
- Try mini sweetcorn or sugar snap peas for extra crunch

Tasty Little Extras

- Cheese cubes or mini cheese shapes
- Mini pitta pockets or crackers
- Small pasta salads or couscous bowls

Fruity Fun

- Make rainbow fruit sticks (grapes, berries, melon)
- Use cookie cutters for shaped melon or apple slices
- Add a small pot of yogurt for dipping



Fun But Healthy Treats

- Homemade oat bars or banana muffins
- Rice cakes with spread
- A little pot of raisins or dried fruit

Tips for Parents

- Include a mix of colours – the more colourful, the more exciting!