Playhouse Pre-School

Healthy & Safe Packed Lunches

Helping little ones eat well, grow and stay safe

Good food fuels their play, learning and development!



A healthy packed lunch gives your child the energy and nutrients they need to learn, play and grow. It doesn't need to be expensive or complicated. A few simple, balanced choices can make a big difference!

What should I include?

1 A starchy food – for energy



Choose one:

- Sandwiches, wraps or pitta bread
- Pasta or rice
- Bread rolls or crackers
- Potato or homemade savoury muffins

Wholemeal options can provide extra fibre, but vary these to suit your child's appetite.

2 A source of protein – for growth



Try:

- Egg
- Chicken or other cooked meat
- Tuna or salmon (carefully checked for bones)
- Cheese
- Hummus or beans

3 Fruit and vegetables – for vitamins



Include a variety of colours and textures:

- Banana or soft pear
- Strawberries or blueberries (prepared safely)
- Peeled satsuma segments
- Cucumber or pepper (prepared appropriately)
- Soft-cooked carrot or other vegetables

4 A dairy food or suitable alternative



For example:

- Natural yoghurt
- Cheese
- Fromage frais
- A calcium-fortified alternative, where appropriate

5 A drink



Water is a great choice to keep your child hydrated.

Packed lunch ideas

- Cheese sandwich, soft fruit and yoghurt.
- Chicken wrap, cucumber (prepared safely) and banana.
- Pasta with tuna, soft-cooked vegetables and fruit.
- Egg sandwich, strawberries (prepared safely) and natural yoghurt.
- Hummus sandwich, soft vegetable sticks and pear (prepared appropriately).

Offer child-sized portions and follow your child's appetite.
It is fine if your child doesn't eat everything.

Preventing Choking

Young children are still learning to chew and swallow safely. The size, shape and texture of food can make a difference.

ALWAYS PREPARE THESE FOODS CAREFULLY:



Grapes, cherry tomatoes and small round fruit
Cut into quarters lengthways. Never pack them whole.



Raw carrot and other hard vegetables
Avoid hard raw chunks. Grate them or cook until soft, particularly for younger children.



Apples and other firm fruit
Cut into thin slices or grate. For younger children, soften firm fruit where needed.



Sausages and similar round foods
Remove skins where appropriate and cut lengthways into narrow strips, then into manageable pieces. Avoid serving them as round coins.



Whole nuts and hard foods
Do not give young children whole nuts, popcorn or hard sweets because of the choking risk.



Stones, pips and bones
Remove fruit stones and hard pips, and carefully check fish and meat for bones.

Safe eating tips

- **Children should sit** upright and remain seated while eating.
- **Always supervise** children while they eat.
- Encourage children to eat slowly and chew their food properly.
- Adapt food size and texture to your child's age, abilities and stage of development.

A few extra tips

- Use an insulated lunch bag and ice pack to keep perishable foods cool.
- Check ingredients and food labels, especially for allergens.
- **Please tell Playhouse** about any allergies or special dietary requirements.
- Follow the setting's packed lunch and food allergy guidance.

Thank you for helping us support healthy eating and safe mealtimes at Playhouse Pre-School!

For further advice, visit the NHS website: **www.nhs.uk**

Based on NHS guidance for healthy food choices and safe food preparation for babies and young children.

Playhouse Pre-School

Early years food choking hazards

Food Standards Agency
food.gov.uk

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/