



## Packed Meal Guidance

**Part of our role as Early Years Educators it is important to promote and advocate for children to make healthy lifestyle choices. A healthy diet is a huge part of a healthy lifestyle. A healthy diet contributes to good physical and mental wellbeing, good energy levels. Healthy habits that are embedded at an early age help are easier to stick to.**

Meals provided by Little Angels are designed to give children a balanced diet and offer value for money. We understand that some parents like to provide packed lunches to give all children equal opportunities to access a healthy diet and make healthy decisions we have created the guidance below.

### Independence at mealtimes

We encourage children to be independent with their meals so wherever possible please pack what they can manage themselves for example yoghurt pots may be easier than tubes and satsumas may need to be peeled at home.

### Please do not provide the following items

All packed meals are checked before serving, to support children to make healthy choices be fair on all children the following items will be removed from lunch boxes:

- **Any product containing nuts** (due to potentially life-threatening allergies)
- **Fried crisps** (however you may provide baked crisps such as cheddars or quavers)
- **Sweets, chocolate, and high sugar cakes, biscuits snacks etc** including 'fruit juice' sweets (we all like them but we don't need them every day please keep these treats to be enjoyed at home)
- **High sugar yoghurt or dessert pots** such as chocolate corner yoghurts etc.
- **Squash or fizzy or other high sugar drinks** for example 'Capri sun' (these will be replaced with water)

### Choking hazards

Please see the below information on choking hazards, this information may change as official guidance changes. Although you may feel your child is unlikely to choke this guidance must be followed in case of the unlikely event of another child accessing this food.

- Pip or stones in fruit – **must** be removed
- Small round fruits such as grapes, blueberries, cherries, strawberries, cherry tomatoes etc – **must** be cut in half lengthways
- Sausages and hot dogs – **must** be cut length ways including cocktail sausages
- Meat or fish – all bones, skin and fat **must** be removed
- Popcorn, chewing gum, marshmallows, jelly cubes, ice cubes boiled sweets – **must** not be provided

### Handy tips to remember

- **Keep it small**; remember a portion is the size of your child's cupped hand.

- **Can they open it themselves?** e.g. frubes, yogurt pots, peel oranges?
- **Variety.** Try different fruit, vegetables, bread etc.
- **Gradual change is best.** It can take up to 20 tastes for a child to get used to a new food, so keep trying!!
- **Prepare the packed meals together,** if you can (we know this is not always possible)
- **You can often use up left overs** e.g. cold pasta or rice could make a salad, small portions of cold pizza are good as well.
- **Whole wheat/grain options** it is important to offer whole wheat pastas breads and whole grain rice but they can fill children up quickly so small amounts are best
- **Children's appetite can vary** pack for what you think you child would need, we encourage children to eat enough to keep them going but do not make children to carry on eating when they are no longer hungry.

## Your 8-point checklist for preparing a lunchbox

### 1. Have you got something from the bread, other cereals, potatoes group?

Ideas: Bread and bread rolls, bagel, pitta bread, French stick, Scotch pancakes, English muffins, fruit scones, currant buns, fruit bread, malt loaf, Matzo, crisp bread and crackers, pasta and rice salads. Wholegrain breads are fine occasionally, but remember young children have small stomachs and too much fibre can replace energy rich foods needed for growth and interfere with the absorption of minerals. It is best to avoid fibre enriched foods.

### 2. Have you got something from the fruit and vegetable group?

Ideas: Salad in sandwiches and rolls, cherry tomatoes, cucumber, carrot sticks, corn on the cob, celery, apples, pears, satsumas, bananas, grapes, melon, kiwi, plums, nectarine, canned fruit pieces, raisins, dried apricots, dish of fruit salad, fruit smoothies and pure fruit juices.

### 3. Have you got something from the meat, fish and alternatives group?

Ideas: Slices of ham, chicken and turkey, boiled eggs or omelette, canned tuna and salmon, smoked salmon, hummus, mixed beans

### 4. Have you got something from the milk and dairy food group?

Ideas: Milk, cheddar, edam, cheese triangle, low fat soft cheese, cottage cheese with pineapple chunks, fruit yoghurt, fromage frais, drinking yoghurt, pots of rice pudding

### 5. Have you got a drink?

Milk and water are readily available for all children all day every day, please provide a drinks bottle to remain at the nursery which your child can use through the day. You may want to include a small carton of fruit juice or smoothie or a drinking yoghurt, but you don't have to.

### 6. Are the portions the correct size?

Remember your children only have small hands, mouths and tummies. Please put in the amount of food you would normally expect your child to eat. Cutting up food like sandwiches and fruit into small manageable child size pieces is a good idea because children can be put off if they have to tackle a too large portion. The portion size of fruit and vegetables for pre school children is approximately two-thirds of an adult portion. Half an apple or one small 60g banana is a portion of fruit for a pre school child. Ultimately you know your child best so provide a portion size you feel best suits them.

### 7. Are the foods familiar?

Please put familiar foods prepared in their usual way in the packed lunch, for example if you usually peel the skin off fruit or cut crusts off bread please do so for their packed lunch. Packed lunch times are not a good time to introduce new foods to your child as it may be upsetting for the child if they are hungry and don't like the food they have been given.

### 8. Have you included a freezer pack?

We are unable to refrigerate packed lunches so please include a freezer pack.

## **Lunch box ideas**

### Lunch box 1

- Small pitta filled with cream cheese & cucumber
- Cereal bar (NO NUTS)
- Clementine/ Satsuma or grapes (cut lengthways)
- Small yogurt drink

### Lunch box 2

- 1 small wholemeal roll thinly spread with butter or olive spread with a filling
- 1 Baby Bel cheese or Cheese String
- Apple slices and raisins
- 1 Packet baked crisps

### Lunch box 3

- Hummus and grated carrot sandwiches cut into shapes with a biscuit cutter
- Raspberry jelly with raspberries
- Make up a sugar free jelly. In small pots add 5/6 frozen raspberries, pour on the jelly. Put in the fridge to set.
- Small pot of fromage frais or a frube

### Lunch box 4

- Small slice of Ham and Pineapple pizza
- A few cherry tomatoes (cut to avoid circular shape)
- Small pot of yogurt
- Small portion of fruit (don't forget to cut any grapes lengthways!)

## **Packed high tea ideas**

High tea is optional and some families prefer children not to have high tea. Some children will need an evening meal in addition to high tea.

### High tea 1

- 1 or 2 bread sticks
- Cheese cubes
- A few cherry tomatoes (cut to avoid circular shape)

### High tea 2

- 2 cream crackers with spreadable cheese triangle
- Small portion of fruit (don't forget to cut any grapes lengthways!)

### High tea 3

- Homemade savoury scone
- Carrot and cucumber sticks

### High tea 4

- 4 small rice cakes
- Hand full of mixed berries
- Small yoghurt

## **Meal times at Little Angels Day Care**

Some parents like to give their children meals at home at similar times to when they would receive them at nursery. We take a flexible approach to meal timings to ensure that they do not get in the way of rich learning experiences, and they best meet the needs of all children.

**Breakfast served before 8.30**

**Lunch served approximately 12.15**

**High tea served approximately 4.15pm**

Staff at Little Angels will be more than happy to offer advice on packing meals for your child.

Should your child require special consideration outside of this guidance please contact a member of the nursery management team.

Feedback on this guidance can be made via email.