



MEDIA RELEASE



An initiative by the
Consumer Education Project of Milk SA

How dairy helps you to provide affordable, nutrient-rich lunchboxes for kids

The weekday challenge is all about finding the balance between our work, school, home and family demands. Facing severe time constraints and competing agendas, we have to still find the smart ways to help our kids eat well, avoid unnecessary snacking and be as physically active as possible during the weekdays. This highlights the importance of starting each day with a healthy, nutrient-rich breakfast – even if that's breakfast on-the-run, or just popping a yoghurt and a fresh fruit in your handbag for your kids to snack on the way to school.

Planning our kids' school lunches and snacks for the school week helps to keep healthy eating on track and keeps our focus on providing them with nutrient-rich whole foods, making sure we are including fresh, seasonal produce. Taking time to prepare for making school lunchboxes at home, using the many good ideas and time-saving hacks that are easy to find, is also far easier on the pocket than giving them money for tuck shop foods, which do not always adhere to healthy eating guidelines.

This daily attention to eating well and developing the habit of being physically active every day is critical for South African children. 'Be active!' is one of the South African Food-based Dietary Guidelines. Studies have shown that childhood obesity and overweight are increasing rapidly. In addition, nutritional deficiencies and the resultant stunting of normal childhood development and growth are still prevalent in South Africa.

Maretha Vermaak, registered dietitian at Rediscover Dairy says,

"Undernutrition includes protein-energy malnutrition and a number of micronutrient deficiencies. The health consequences of undernutrition include stunted physical growth and delayed mental development. These conditions affect millions of people, especially in the developing world, where approximately 60% of deaths among children under the age of five years are associated with undernutrition. Like many other parts of the world, South Africa faces a double burden of disease where overweight and obesity as well as undernutrition can occur in the same country, the same communities and even in the same household."

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The 11 South African Food-based Dietary

Guidelines provides a simple framework to help maintain a healthy diet, assist in keeping weight in check and make nutrient-rich food choices. They highlight five types of food that should be included in our daily diet – starchy foods as part of most meals; plenty of vegetables and fruit; legumes such as dried beans and lentils; dairy such as milk, maas and yoghurt; lean meat, eggs, fish and chicken. Too often though, the typical South African diet is found to have little variety of foods and a low intake of vegetables, fruit and dairy, while processed foods, sugary and salty foods as well as drinks high in sugar are consumed all too regularly.

☑ **The benefits of whole foods** – Whole foods are foods that are minimally processed or not processed at all, such as fresh vegetables and fruits, milk, eggs, whole grains and legumes. The benefits of whole foods are that they are naturally complex, nutrient-rich foods providing a spectrum of nutrients that our bodies need to maintain healthy functioning. The health benefits from whole foods are more than the sum of its nutrients.

☑ **Taking charge of school-day lunches and snacks** - Good lunchbox choices for learners in primary school take into consideration both their nutritional needs and their priorities at break time. Most young kids look forward to the bell because what they most want to do is run out and play. Therefore, lunchbox foods need to be easy to handle and consume. Your child's stage of development is also a factor to think about. Teens can be weight conscious, and they also often have a big need to fit in and be perceived as cool.

Planning healthy options for lunchboxes by shopping for whole food ingredients over the weekend and prepping lunchbox ideas when you have the time avoids last minute decisions, which tend to be less healthy and more costly. It helps to have a variety of suitable, convenient and nutrient-rich options on hand, and to involve your kids in planning their school lunches and snacks. Think also about portion control if your child needs to manage their weight or is striving towards a healthier weight.



Keep your focus on both the nutritional value and convenience of your lunch box choices. For example, adding a dairy component to a lunchbox such as a small full-cream yoghurt or a portion of cheese is easy to do, and it will boost their daily intake of vital nutrients such as calcium and Vitamin A. Flavoured milk is a great alternative to an energy drink after sports practice. It helps to rehydrate, refuel and repair and at the same time provides all the important nutrients provided by milk. Of course, budget is also a big consideration, and making up lunchboxes at home has the advantage of being more cost-effective than providing cash for takeaways and tuck shop snacks.

Cost, convenience and nutritional value – what are the options?

Maretha Vermaak and Dr Hester Vermeulen, a specialist in consumer economics at the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy (BFAP) have teamed up to give some examples of school lunchboxes that are affordable, easy to prepare at home and nutrient-rich:



ESTIMATED
R22.59

Cheese, ham, lettuce and mayo sandwich on low GI bread plus an apple and 250ml UHT milk

Hester says: “This choice is good nutritional value for money. It’s a top option containing good quantity of energy (3123kJ), protein (32g), fat (43g), and calcium (677mg). It is also high in fibre.”

Maretha says: “Make sure you choose full cream milk so your child gets the benefits of Vitamin A as well.”

ESTIMATED
R28.12

Egg mayo sandwich, water and 100ml flavoured yoghurt plus grapes

Hester says: “A good overall option giving your child nutritional value for your money.”

Maretha says: “It will also provide you with almost 25% of your child’s daily needs for calcium at 361mg.”



Peanut butter sandwich
on brown bread with
flavoured milk plus an
apple

ESTIMATED
R14.49

Hester says: “This cost-effective option provides good quality protein and the highest fibre content.”

Maretha says: “This lunchbox meals will help your child to sustain their energy levels after break time and also gives them a good boost of calcium (531mg), which is more than a third of a teenager’s daily need of calcium.”



Top Tips for healthy school lunchboxes:

- Plan, shop and prepare on weekends
- Get your kids involved in making up their lunchboxes in a fun way
- Choose healthy options that are convenient, easy to handle and eat
- Focus on nutrient-rich whole foods and include fruit, veg, milk and wholegrains
- Add dairy options daily such as milk, cheese, yoghurt or maas
- Avoid sugary drinks, sugary foods and salty snacks

On 1 June 2022,
South Africa joins many other
countries across the world in
celebrating World Milk Day.

World Milk Day was initiated by the
UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)
in 2001 to raise awareness about the
importance of dairy in nutrition and the
agricultural economy.

To find out more about World Milk Day,
visit www.worldmilkday.org



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