

January 15, 2015

Give kids a healthy lunchbox option this school year

As families prepare for the new school year, they are being reminded to give children healthy lunchbox choices.

South Western Sydney Local Health District's (SWSLHD) Healthy Children's Initiative Manager, Leah Choi, said small changes and extra care when packing lunches and snacks can be the key to positive change to guard against overweight and obesity in school children.

"Healthy habits formed early in life can stick with a person beyond childhood, so there's no better time to teach children healthy food habits than now," Ms Choi said.

"What's more, obese adults who were overweight as adolescents tend to have a higher risk of weight-related diseases including cancer, diabetes and high blood pressure.

"Eating healthy food can help children concentrate at school and can give them the right type of energy for their day.

Ms Choi suggested making simple changes like making sure you pack food that comes in its own packaging, like apples, sultanas, nuts, grapes or boiled eggs rather than packaged chips or sugar-laden muesli bars.

"The less manufactured the food, the higher the chance of it being healthier; and probably cheaper at the check-out as well.

"Considering children often consume up to 50 per cent of their daily calories at school, it's important that their lunchbox is filled with yummy, healthy choices.

"Try incorporating fruit and vegetables wherever you can, whether it's grated carrot or lettuce on a sandwich, or homemade muffins with dried fruit, carrot, zucchini, banana or pumpkin."

Ms Choi said it's also important to remember appropriate serving sizes.

"Fruit is great, but not if it's overdone and a child ends up having 10 pieces. Parents should focus on appropriate serving sizes and on food that is balanced and gives kids energy throughout the day, like healthy carbohydrates and whole grains that are really important for longer lasting energy.

"Minimise extra snacks that can be tempting to kids at the supermarket like muesli and fruit bars: they are often full of sugars, which can also harm their teeth."

****MEDIA: A video featuring Ms Choi's top lunchbox tips is available for you to share on your websites and social media platforms at: <http://youtu.be/My-5hC1J0mw>**

For more information about Go4Fun visit www.go4fun.com.au