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## **Avoid the lunch time blues by giving kids a healthier lunchbox option**

Packing nutritious but exciting lunches for school is a challenge for most parents, so just imagine how tough it is for children who expect a host of delectable delights in their lunchbox.

South Western Sydney Local Health District's (SWSLHD) Healthy Children's Initiative Manager, Claire Southwood Jones, 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 Southwood Jones 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 Southwood Jones suggested making simple changes like packing food in separate bags, 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 Southwood Jones said it's also important to remember appropriate serving sizes.

"Fruit is great, in moderation. 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 SWSLHD's top lunchbox tips is available for you to share on your websites and social media platforms at: <http://youtu.be/My-5hC1J0mw>**