Fairfield Refugee Nutrition Project

Lunchbox Workshop
LESSON PLAN LUNCHBOX WORKSHOP

Background
Healthy lunches and snacks are important for all children. Eating healthy food helps children concentrate and learn. Many new arrivals may be unfamiliar with the packed school lunch and many traditional foods do not lend themselves to packing. The differences in climate and food safety concerns, peer and child pressure and knowledge of common lunchbox foods which can be a source of hidden fat and sugar influence foods consumed.

Messages
Keep lunchbox foods fresh and safe by adding something frozen
A healthy lunchbox includes a protein food, a dairy food, fruit, vegetables, a cereal and water.
Parents choose when their children use the canteen
Parents choose what foods are purchased at the canteen.

Topic
Healthy lunchboxes

Focus Questions
What makes up a healthy lunchbox?
Which foods are best to include? And which foods should I leave out?
How do I keep the food safe and fresh till lunchtime?
Is the canteen ok?

Learning Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Resources</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning school lunches</td>
<td>Group leader to present and generate discussion around the six essential lunchbox food groups.</td>
<td>- Presentation cards <a href="http://www.refugeehealth.org.au">www.refugeehealth.org.au</a>.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discuss in detail the foods which are ‘best choices’ and the foods which are ‘best left out’ for each of the essential food groups.</td>
<td>- Pre-prepared food samples.</td>
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<td>Taste test for a selection of the six food groups an item from the ‘best choice’ and an item from the ‘best left out’.</td>
<td>- Napkins.</td>
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<td>Ask the group which food they thought was the healthier one (‘best choice’) and why.</td>
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<td>Discuss the difference between the foods sampled in regards to taste, texture and mouth feel.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ask participants which of the two food samples their children prefer and why. Discuss ideas of how to introduce the healthier (‘best choice’) foods and ask participants to share their personal experiences.</td>
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Keeping school lunches safe
- Group leader to present and discuss tips for keeping lunches safe and fresh at school.
- Discuss using a frozen ice block or water bottle to keep lunches cool. Pass on ice block and water bottle around for people to look at.
- Using actual lunch containers, talk about the different containers that can be used to pack lunch food and drinks in.
- Presentation cards www.refugeehealth.org.au.
- Paper bag, plastic lunchbox, ice brick (frozen), drink bottle (frozen), insulated lunchbox.

Healthy lunch ideas
- Discuss the six healthy lunchbox idea cards.
- Pictorial lunchbox idea cards www.refugeehealth.org.au.

Barriers to trying new foods
- Discuss each lunchbox idea and barriers to trying these ideas at home, or experience in doing so.
- Ask participants if they allow their children to use the canteen. Discuss experiences, cost and managing kids behaviours around the canteen.
- Camera

Managing children’s demands for the school canteen

Knowledge retention
- In small groups ask participants to use available food items (food models or cards) to design a healthy school lunchbox.
- Each group then presents their ideas to the group discussing the reasons for including each food item.
- Take a photograph of each lunchbox idea.

Review Questions
Why is it important to make sure children have a healthy packed lunch?
What food items make a healthy lunch?
How do I keep the food fresh till lunchtime?
What am I going to do at home to control foods purchased and frequency of canteen use?

Evaluation
In small groups ask participants to use available food items (food models or cards) to design a healthy school lunchbox. Each group then presents their ideas to the group discussing the reasons for including each food item. Take a photograph of each lunchbox idea.
Other resources and lessons
From ‘Easing the Transition’, p74, ‘The transition to school lunches.
www.foundationhouse.com.au

From ‘Good Food for New Arrivals’, lesson plan on ‘School lunches’.

Vic Health, Better Health Channel, lunchbox factsheets.
**Fast facts**

- Use insulated lunch boxes or coolers.
- Put a frozen drink bottle or ‘built-in' water bottle or freezer brick in the lunch box.
- Or pack lunches that don't need to be kept cold (be careful with sandwich fillings).

**Introduction**

Young children are particularly vulnerable from food poisoning. Parents and care-givers can help protect kids by following a few simple guidelines.

Keep your kids lunches safe from food borne illness with our simple tips on packing the perfect lunch box!

**Tips for packing safe lunches**

- Use insulated lunch boxes or coolers.
- To help contents stay cool, make sure the lunch box/coolers has a frozen drink bottle(popper) or ‘built-in' water bottle or freezer brick.
- Or pack lunches that don't need to be kept cold.
• The types of lunch items that don't require refrigeration include sandwiches with spreads like Vegemite™, jam, UHT dairy products or whole fruits

More tips for packing safe lunches

Follow food safety tips whenever you are handling food for yourself and your family:

• The bacteria that cause food poisoning grow between 5°C and 60°C, this is known as the “temperature danger zone”. Keep cold food in the fridge until you are ready to cook or serve; serve hot food steaming hot.
• Cook food thoroughly. Cook poultry, minced meats, and sausages until well done, right through to the centre. No pink should be left visible.
• Separate raw and cooked food and don’t use the same utensils, especially cutting boards, for both.
• Wash your hands in hot soapy water and dry thoroughly before preparing food, and after touching raw meat and chicken.
• Keep utensils and kitchen clean.
• Lunches can safely be made ahead of time (the previous night) provided they are then kept in the fridge.
So what did the NSW Food Authority do?

The Food Authority’s scientists thought it would be interesting to see just how warm lunch boxes without frozen poppers or ice blocks can get on a warm summer’s day compared to those with ice blocks or frozen poppers.

Just like parents across NSW do every school morning, our scientists made up a range of sandwiches. They then packed them into identical lunch boxes.

They made sure some boxes had a “temperature control device”, which is just a fancy term our microbiologists use for a frozen popper or ice brick!

Our scientists also used lunch boxes that didn’t have poppers or ice blocks, while some sandwiches went into nothing more elaborate than a brown paper bag. No temperature control device there!

This way they could compare all three to find which was best at keeping food cool.

Time and temperature are important factors behind bacterial growth. Kid’s lunches can sit in school bags for up to five hours from when the food is prepared to when it’s eaten at lunch.

We all know kids often leave their school bags outside the class room, so we left our sammies outside in a shady spot on a day when the temperature reached 25 degrees.

One of the Authority’s Food-Borne Illness investigators took careful temperature readings each hour for five hours. These were then plotted on a graph, which you’ll find below.

Our science team then sent all the sandwiches off to the lab to see how many food germs were growing. We’ll get to that shortly.
Project Lunchbox results

- Sandwiches without any frozen water or drink got hottest, and most quickly
- Outside temperature
- Lunch in paper bag
- Lunch box only
- Lunch box incl. frozen brick
- Lunch box incl. frozen drink

Bacteria multiplied most quickly for sandwiches at higher temperatures

Indicative Bacteria Growth:

- Starting bacteria count: 25,000 bacteria/g
Our graph clearly shows how the sammies in the paper bag were up to 12 degrees warmer than the lunch box with a frozen drink. The lunch box with an ice block did pretty well, while the lunch box without a frozen popper or block wasn’t much cooler than the paper bag.

You’ll notice there were bacteria in the sandwiches first thing in the morning, after they were freshly made. There’s no need to worry, as nearly all food has some bacteria present and is still safe to eat.

In fact most bacteria are harmless. It’s only when certain types of bacteria grow and multiply that we can become sick.

You’ll see there were lots more bacteria in the sandwiches in the paper bag and lunch box without a frozen popper or block than in the lunch boxes with the frozen block and popper.

**What can we learn from all this measuring?**

Simple! The warmer it is, and the longer food stays warm, the more bacteria grow. If there are disease causing bacteria present they might grow too and that’s bad news as they can potentially make us sick.

**What are kids actually taking to school?**

We also looked at the type of lunch box kids take to school.

Our Food Authority Lunch Box Survey examined the lunch boxes of 598 children aged four to 12-years-old at schools across Sydney.

Teachers were provided with a “School Lunch Box Survey” form and asked students if they had a frozen drink or ice block in their lunch box and if they had foods that needed to be kept cool.
We found ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Lunch box contents</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of children with a frozen drink or ice brick:</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children with sandwiches for lunch:</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children with sandwiches with meat, fish, chicken or cheese:</td>
<td>92</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Food Authority would like to thank the following schools for participating in our survey:

- Cambridge Gardens Public School
- Kenthurst Public School

Lunchbox Safety

Use an insulated lunchbox or bag.

Put a frozen ice block or frozen drink in the lunchbox.

Freeze sandwiches the night before.

Chill cooked food before packing in the lunchbox.

Make kids wash their hands before eating and after the toilet or playing with pets.
The Essential Ingredients
Six items to put in a lunch box

✓ 1 fruit
✓ Vegetables
✓ 1 dairy food
✓ 1 protein food
✓ Starchy foods
✓ Water.

FRUIT

Best choices
Fresh or tinned fruit.

Best left out
Dried fruit bars and 'straps'
VEGETABLES

Best choices
All salad and cooked vegetables.

Best left out
Chips and packets of potato &

DAIRY FOOD

Best choices
Cheese slices, cubes or sticks
Yoghurt - natural or fruit yoghurt
Cow's milk or calcium enriched soy /rice mil

Best left out
Dairy desserts’
**PROTEIN FOOD**

### Best choices
- Egg or cheese - low fat.
- Canned fish such as sardines, tuna and salmon.
- Sliced cold meats such as ham, roast beef, ham.
- Bean and lentil.
- Nuts and peanut butter.

### Best left out
- Fatty meats such as salami and devon.

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**STARCHY FOOD**

### Best choices
- Bread (best wholegrain)
- Rice, pasta, noodles

### Best left out
- Oven baked' savory biscuits.
- Donuts and cakes.
DRINKS

Best choices
Water
Milk (low fat)

Best left out
Sweet drinks
Cordials
Fizzy drinks

Tips
To help young kids know what to eat, write ‘lunch’ or ‘recess’ on each of the foods.

Buying single serve foods is often more expensive.

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<tr>
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<th>Total Cost</th>
<th>Cost for 1</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two Fruits</td>
<td>$5.57</td>
<td>$0.93</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$2.84</td>
<td>$0.48</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Healthy Lunchbox Ideas

Faye Southcombe
Sandwich

Yoghurt

Apple

Sandwich

Strawberries & corn

Egg

Celery, beans & cheese

Mandarin
Kid’s Sandwich Fillings

- Low fat cream cheese, chopped celery and sultanas
- Grated carrot and cheese with low fat mayonnaise
- Chopped cooked chicken and mayonnaise with lettuce
- Grated cheese with chopped celery or carrot
- Left over roast meat with grated carrot, chopped lettuce and chutney or no salt tomato sauce.
- Peanut butter, grated carrot and sultanas
- Vegemite, cheese and tomato
- Take a roll and a banana and eat them together
- Curried egg and lettuce*
- Put your fillings, like grated carrot, lettuce and avocado, inside a pita bread
- Tuna mixed with corn kernels and mayonnaise

* To make curried egg, hard boil the eggs, and allow to cool. Once they have cooled, peel and mash with curry spices.