Parents asked to get creative for back to school lunches

Start healthy eating habits early and be inspired to fill your kids’ lunch boxes with healthy food that’s quick and easy to prepare.

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service paediatric dietitian Justin Wright said good nutrition was vital for growing bodies but many parents lacked time and inspiration.

“Most of us are time poor and this can lead to parents resorting to highly processed food that can be high in added saturated fat, salt and sugar and low in vital nutrients,” Mr Wright said.

“Queensland children are generally healthy, but most eat too many unhealthy ‘extra’ foods like chips, lollies and soft drink. It can be easy to forget kids need up to two servings of fruit and five servings of vegetables a day.

“With a bit of planning it’s easy to fill up your kid’s lunch box with healthy food and avoid less healthy highly processed food.”

The following lunch box ideas are quick and easy to prepare and healthy:

- Sandwiches – vary the bread and fillings. Some interesting combinations are tuna, corn and sweet chilli sauce; roast vegetables, pesto and baby spinach; chicken, lettuce, grated carrot and mayonnaise; avocado, refried beans, reduced fat cheese and salsa; and baked bean and reduced fat cheese.
- Mini pizza - top half a bread roll, muffin or pocket bread with tomato paste, ham, pineapple, capsicum and onion. Sprinkle with reduced fat cheese and grill until golden.
- Rice salad - add chicken or lean meat, carrot, celery, pineapple or other combinations of left over rice.
- Finger salad pack - combine a selection of meat, reduced fat cheese, egg, vegetable sticks and serve with a bread roll.
- Winter warmers - fill a small flask with leftover vegetable soup, spaghetti bolognaise, noodles and vegetables, or stir-fry with rice. Some schools may have a microwave to reheat food.

Mr Wright also recommends that parents take the following food safety precautions when preparing lunches:
• include a frozen drink or small freezer brick in your child’s lunch box
• pack lunches in a cooler bag or insulated lunch box
• freeze yoghurt or milk to keep at a safe temperature
• clean lunch boxes regularly
• make sure school bags containing lunch boxes are stored in the shade
• wash hands before preparing and eating food.

Mr Wright said eating habits are generally formed in early childhood, so it is important to give your child the best start by packing a healthy lunchbox.

“By being good role models, parents can send a powerful message to their children in regard to healthy eating.”

Media opportunity – interview with paediatric dietician – Nambour Hospital

ENDS

Media contact: Alexia Osborn | 5470 5833