

Media Release

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Building a Healthy Lunchbox Culture

- Parents, schools and children combined play an important role towards supporting healthy lunchbox culture.
- Nutrition Australia's Healthy Lunchbox Week is here to help schools, families, and children kickstart the year with healthy lunchboxes.

With most children now back at school, the long-awaited daily routine of school life has finally returned and with that comes the lunchbox. Unlike the enviable school lunch provisions of our northern hemisphere counterparts, the school lunchbox is iconic to school life in Australia.

Love it or loathe it, parents would generally agree they carry the large burden of responsibility when it comes to lunchbox planning, preparing and packing. But creating a healthy lunchbox culture is more than just what goes in the lunchbox. This Healthy Lunchbox Week, Nutrition Australia is calling for schools to consider how they can help families in the lunchbox realm and support child agency.

"Schools are an ideal setting for helping families to pack healthy lunchboxes" says Nutrition Australia dietitian and mum of two teens, Leanne Elliston. "By this we do not mean judging or applying rules around lunchboxes" says Leanne "such practices can be more damaging than helpful and can really strain the relationship between schools and families". To support families, Leanne suggests schools regularly share healthy lunchbox tips, recipes and ideas within their community. "Whether it is in the school newsletter or on social media there is always room to pop in a tip of the week or healthy recipe to keep the inspiration flowing". Getting this information has never been easier with many credible organisations and health promotion programs sharing plenty of useful information just a click away.

Much of lunchbox culture comes down to children's experiences at school. The eating environment at school plays a significant part in children's enjoyment of their food from home. A survey undertaken by Nutrition Australia found that many parents felt their children had insufficient eating time at school. This is particularly the case for schools that combine eating time with playtime. "We are more likely to enjoy our food when we have the time and space to sit down and eat together" says Leanne. "Whether it is in the classroom, the playground or a designated dining area, children need to feel comfortable when eating their food without feeling rushed". Lunchtime at school also provides important social learning opportunities that help children express their identity and develop respect for multicultural diversity.

When it comes to lunchbox culture we also need to factor in the child's involvement. This includes helping them develop a sense of ownership by including them in decision making and developing an awareness of healthy food choices. "When at school, it's important to respect children's decision of what, how much or whether they wish to eat at all".

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About Healthy Lunchbox Week

Healthy Lunchbox Week runs from 6 -12 February 2022. It is an initiative of Nutrition Australia sharing credible lunchbox information, teacher resources and recipes among schools and families to help kickstart the year for children's health, well-being and learning. Visit the Healthy Lunchbox Week website www.healthylunchboxweek.org.au

About Nutrition Australia

Nutrition Australia is a registered charity that aims to inspire and empower healthy eating for all Australians.