



THE HEART
AND STROKE
FOUNDATION
SOUTH AFRICA

Healthy eating tips for kids

The COVID-19 outbreak is upending life for families around the world. To make things even harder, panic buying and disruptions to food supply systems mean some foods can now be difficult to find. And for many people, unemployment and lost income are making food shopping an additional financial challenge.

While many parents are understandably looking to ready meals and processed foods as a quick and low-cost way to feed the family, there are convenient, affordable and healthy alternatives.

Here are five ways to help feed your children a varied, nutritious diet that will support their growth and development, all while building healthy eating habits.

1. Keep up fruit and vegetable intake

Purchasing, storing and cooking fresh vegetables can be challenging in a lockdown, especially when parents are advised to limit trips outside of the home. But it's important to ensure children are still getting plenty of fruit and vegetables in their diet.

Whenever it is possible to get hold of fresh produce, do so. As well as being eaten fresh, fruits and vegetables can be frozen where possible and will retain most of their nutrients and flavour. Using fresh vegetables to cook large batches of soups, stews or other dishes will make them last longer and provide meal options for a few days. These can also be frozen where possible and then quickly reheated.

2. Swap in healthy dried or canned alternatives when fresh produce is not available

Fresh produce is almost always the best option, but when it is not available there are plenty of healthy alternatives that are easy to store and prepare.

Canned beans and chickpeas, which are high in protein and fibre, can be stored for months and can be included in meals in many ways. Canned oily fish such as sardines, pilchards and tuna are rich in essential omega 3 fatty acids and a range of vitamins and minerals. These can be used cold in sandwiches, salads or pasta dishes, or cooked as part of a warm meal.

Dried goods like dried beans, pulses and grains such as lentils, split peas, rice, couscous or quinoa are also nutritious, long-lasting options that are tasty, affordable and filling. Rolled oats cooked with milk or water can serve as an excellent breakfast option.

3. Build up a stock of healthy snacks

Children often need to eat a snack or two during the day to keep them going. Rather than giving kids sweets or salty snacks, opt for healthier options like unsalted nuts, low fat yoghurt, chopped or dried fruits and boiled eggs. These foods are nutritious, more filling, and help build healthy eating habits that last a lifetime.

4. Limit highly processed foods

While using fresh produce may not always be possible, try to limit the amount of highly processed foods in your shopping basket. Ready-to-eat meals, packaged snacks and desserts are often high in saturated fat, sugars and salt.

Remember when shopping - always look out for the Heart Mark and DSA logos to help you choose healthier food options for you and your family!

5. Make cooking and eating a fun and meaningful part of your family routine

Cooking and eating together is a great way to create healthy routines, strengthen family bonds and have fun. Wherever you can, involve your children in food preparation.

Use these tips to put together nutritious, balanced meals. Here are [5 lunchbox menus](#) to get you started:

Lunchbox 1 Quick and easy:

Cheddar cheese cubes

Mini rice crackers

Low fat strawberry yoghurt

Lunchbox 2 Sandwich option:

Hard boiled eggs

Wholewheat bread

Baby carrots

Apple

Lunchbox 3 Salad option:

Tuna pasta salad

Low fat mixed berry yoghurt

Lunchbox 4 Vegetarian option:

Hummus

Wholewheat pita

Tomatoes

Cucumbers

Sliced orange

Lunchbox 5 Funky Friday option:

Peanut butter

Banana

Sliced apple

Low fat vanilla yoghurt

For more healthy, tasty recipes, download our Cooking from the Heart recipe books one, two, and three from our website <http://www.heartfoundation.co.za/healthy-eating/>