



relying on things that are easily accessible in the supermarket. And so many food say “ideal for lunchboxes” on them and they really aren’t. All that means is that they’ve been individually packaged, put in brightly colored packaging, contain a lot of sugar, often preservatives and additives, and they’ve been put in so you can literally go to the cupboard in the morning, take it out and put it in the lunchbox. By the way, yoghurts are a problem because again if you look at the amount of sugar in yoghurt. So now we’re being told by the World Health Organization that 5% of our intake should be sugars and no more. So for children that means between 4 and 5 teaspoonfuls a day and if you look again at those yoghurts a lot of them have got maybe 2 maybe 3 teaspoonfuls of sugar in them. That means that just from the yoghurt which always thought of as one of those healthier things is causing the child to overeat sugar at lunch time. Let’s think about what else there might be, there might be a sugary cereal at breakfast and something for the evening meal too. So really the lunchbox for me is so critical, that 7 hour period there at school you gotta really think what you’re gonna put in it that’s gonna help them to thrive and survive and do very well at school.

B: It’s interesting that you say when you started out your page Not Just Sandwiches, that it took off. Why do you think that is? I mean when I think about my kids at school, most of the children have these white bread sandwiches so there’s obviously an interest in other options for lunchboxes.

J: Yeah, I think there’s a general increase in awareness that actually, if we relied on food marketing companies to educate and advise us as parents, we would be making the wrong decisions over and over again. So, we actually looked into this sort of health situation and we looked at the statistics, we certainly in the UK we have a situation where 1 in 5 children are obese or overweight when they go into primary schools, that age 4 to 5 and then 2 in 5 by the time they come out of schools so something happens in that intervening period. Obviously they’re growing but you wouldn’t have thought that it was hormonal growth to explain that one away. So we know that there is a misalignment of education certainly that’s being received at school or the awareness and the knowledge of the parents. So for me it’s about trying to work with those parents who I see as almost ambassadors. Those are the parents that do want to make a change and do want to make differences and they are the parents whose friends will look at them and say woah they’re doing it, okay let’s give it a go, let’s give it a go my children. And I think that’s the ripple effect that we’re now seeing. People are taking the health of their family into their own hands.

B: And this course, how many parents have joined are a testimony to that. I mean it’s still a minority though, isn’t it Jenny but this is what we’re talking about, the ripple effect and it’s the only way to do it.

J: Absolutely. And I entirely agree you know and obviously people know what I do for a living but I can even see in my immediate area you know you can have a very positive influence on people. You’re a normal person and you go about your business but you decide to empower yourselves and your family because actually at some point, you know I have a nearly 11 year old daughter, she’s gonna go out, off to school on her own, she’s gonna make decisions. If I have an educated parent well enough in what eating a whole fritter actually is why would she make any other decisions than what a lot of other children make which is the fastfood, which is the culture that builds up around schools to make it easy for kids to make the wrong decision.

B: Oh my gosh, it’s so frustrating Jenny, it really is. It’s insanity and none of it makes any sense. We absolutely have to take control of these parents. We have to educate ourselves, educate our children and as you said, spread it out to the community and even this sort of online community as well. That’s the only way I sort of personally given a hope that you’re gonna make a change when it comes to the food industry and the marketing and those sorts of big dogs. So here we are, and I guess the big question on my list, in that case is how do you go about creating a well-balanced lunchbox in order to meet children’s nutritional requirements. And can we talk about young children first and then talk about, coz we have some parents of teenagers on the course as well, okay.

J: So basically for both of those age groups actually I tried to simplify the process, so that you could put some of the power into their hands. So, the way I simplified it is to say that in every lunchbox you need to have a protein portion, a starch portion so that could be starchy vegetables or some whole breads..

B: Can you define, give examples as you speak about protein





J: Yeah, so look for lean protein, so ideally things like chicken, turkey, fish and tuna is a really cost-effective way to get some good lean protein into a lunchbox. But also if you want to increase the omega 3 in what they're eating then tend salmon, mackerel, sardines, oil fish, not every child is gonna want to have oily fish in their lunch because that can be a bit smelly. But then eggs, fantastic source of protein. So we're looking for some meat protein and if you don't want to have animal protein then there's also things like beans now the obvious thing is to put that into a dip like a white bean dip or hummus. You can make sort of stews and put them in little thermos flasks to keep them formed and that's a really good way. Soup is another way. So if we've got that collection of different things for protein, then we would want to starch it, so I'd say that could be starchy vegetables, so it could be like sweet potato chips or it could be a mashed cauliflower, it could be turnip or squash, butternut squash, spaghetti squash things like that. So that's for starchy vegetables but we could have whole grains as well so it could be wholemeal bread, and I intend to say bread that's thick and uses minimal ingredients so it's made from traditional recipe like a salada or something like wheat whole grain rice or pasta or quinoa or something that's whole grain so they can basically contain the fiber, keep your child fuller, stronger. So we got protein and our carbohydrate then on to calcium, milk

B: your carbohydrate, was it either the starchy vegetable or the grain that you mentioned

J: Yeah, it could be one or the other or it could be a small portion of both but we just want to make sure that you've got that covered coz that's where they're gonna get their energy from. And then you've got your calcium which can come from things like dark green vegetables, so one of the ways that I found to increase that in the lunchbox is to whiz out like rocket, or kale or spinach into a pesto or into a smoothie and then fahili again a great source of calcium and brown sesame seeds and again it can be used as a dressing, it can be used in hummus, or it can be used in a fatjack or for baking, so with the other forms of calcium, it could be your dairy, it could be your natural yoghurt, it could be a little bit of cheese. And then you've got fruits and vegetables which are all about building up in system, antioxidants in the body to override pain ...Trying to get them to name all the different kinds of vegetables and then get them to include those in their lunchbox a variety throughout the week. So it's not gonna be apple everyday, it's not the cucumber everyday, it's a variety. And the sixth component is the drink, and the drink should be ideally water, but if water isn't suitable or it doesn't work, then a small amount of juice watered down. So that's what I recommend for the six components of the balanced lunch box. And they can get involved in the decision-making for that.

B: Yeah, well we talked about that in the course in terms of combating fussy eating and encouraging positive eating habits coz kids absolutely love to feel in control and that they're contributing and that they have a choice and it brings them closer to understanding the importance of real food and then conversations can start around food and the benefits so yeah I love encouraging children to be involved in choosing what goes into their lunch box. In fact I have my kids right down for the week what they would like to eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner. So Jenny what are the benefits of ensuring that your child has a healthy lunchbox everyday?

J: Yeah, so I see every meal as an opportunity to fight nutrition and to not feel for me it's actually about nourishing the body and I think you can teach a child to understand that, that's red tick in the box. So the advantages are that if you have balanced meal and what I mean by that is if you've got the portion sizing right, you've got suitable amount of protein, good amount of carbohydrates or starchy vegetables and so on and so forth, the energy is going to be far more durable throughout the afternoon. One of the analogies that I make to help children understand that is the hare and the tortoise. Most of them know that story, I worked with a Chinese friend the other day and he said that it's rabbit and the tortoise in China but truly it's a global story and essentially the hare has had the white bread jam sandwich for lunch, the piece of cake and the yoghurt and the hare goes racing off with all the energy in the world but of course soon the energy levels drop as the body is prodded with insulin and that level of sugar means that the hare falls asleep under the tree. Meanwhile the tortoise has the durable energy, the tortoise has had the quinoa salad, has had buckwheat cake, has had the apple, and keeps going throughout the afternoon that durance, and they have to be far more capable of doing their math assignment at 2 or 3 pm than the hare who's fast asleep and has given up long ago.

B: I have not heard that. I thought I heard it all Jenny. Love that one. I'm totally gonna share it. Thank you. But what about, we're not just talking bout ensuring their health now by focusing on nourishing them. What are the benefits for the future?





ask you what are the most consistent reasons you see for a kid not eating their lunch and I think fiddly food also tends to be tricky for kids as well I mean they seem to be food that take too long to eat coz I know in my children, they're more interested in going off to play than spending time eating something that's gonna take them the whole of lunch time.

J: Yeah, absolutely. One of the things I've discovered is that little and cut up straws, or those little sticks that you can get that you can stick in to small portions of food and things that you know, though I say it's like a 70's cocktail party and everything full of things on sticks but you know it does make it really accessible for them and literally I can just pick up anything up and again think about the portion size, don't overwhelm a child with massive portions. Keep it small but if you do reduce the bread component, and that you don't have any chips or crisps in there then actually the protein and the fiber and the real foods are so filling you don't need as much of them.

B: Okay, and what about teenagers, just some general ideas and even some lunchbox styles. I wanna know what's cool for kids, you know teenage lunchboxes, what happens, what packaging, what do they wanna eat, what don't they wanna eat, you have any clues for that?

J: yeah, I do, again this is trying to make it so that they don't feel old or different but if they do but it's in a good way. A lot of teens just want to be thought of as young adults. And actually if you look around there's some quite cool things in the market, lunchboxes, drink bottles that are quite funky and that's and yes, they may be different from their friends but they would have good-looking lunch and so we need to think about what it's going to be in. Little ones are used to carrying a child's lunchbox they bring to school, I mean to high school it may look silly but actually there's quite funky, quite new, quite smart, then that's really what you may aim for. And so we need to think about that, but always think about who their idols are, who they look up to. If they're sporty look at who in the sports world is doing great things with their guards, whether it's a rugby fellow, or someone. If they're a dancer, who's doing great things with their nutrition, role model, because that's really what they look for at that age. And really find inspire in them and quite frankly they don't wanna look into their mom at this stage.

B: So true, and unless I say ooh did you know the Australian cricket team, they coached on the paleo diet and my kids, I mean everybody knows what the paleo diet is, it's not that we follow that but it's the low sugar, processed food component of it and then there is suddenly cricket, so absolutely making that connection with where they're at in their life. Finding those role models is getting easier and easier actually.

J: Yeah you're right and then there's a lot of really good stuff happening in sports nutrition. You'd think that it's the world's most incredibly talented surface and actually quite often, I actually look at why they're having that is supposed they have a lot of protein in their diet and the protein could be quite acidic so they certainly alkalize the body by having the green juice. So again in a really good way to say to kids your protein is really important but equally you gotta have the veggies and the fruit and if you don't wanna eat all coz many of us don't have the time, just take it in a smoothie form.

B: I love my smoothies Jen, I can't live without them. They're fantastic tips actually and I think they can be adapted to the younger kids as well because they got their sort of little heroes as well that they follow, I say talking about the green juice as the hulk drink, just little tricks and tips to get fussy eaters on board. Actually I wouldn't mind asking you if you have any, I know this is about lunch boxes but we've got you here I might as well ask because one of the big topics with everyone is fussy eaters and we started quite a bit about it with other people. I mean do you have any tips to combat fussy eating?

J: Yeah, exposure. I would say, from all of my research and all the work that I do, quite a lot of the reasons for fussy eaters being that way is coz of that lack of exposure to certain foods or parents reaction to unfamiliar foods so the theory goes that when our children are born, they're fairly immobile and we are in control but if we think back into the caveman days when the children started to become mobile, they had to work out what was poisonous and what was actually going to be nutritious and gonna do something good. So they became quite picky about what they ate so around the time that we can play ball, about 18 months maybe, a year to 2 months let's say, a wider gap, but actually those are the times that our children start to become a little bit fussy. And believe it or not because we say conditions to want to make our children eat this perfect diet, our facial reaction will give a lot away so when we prepared a beautiful puree meal and it's projected, take it personally and that could be the star watt of the child realizing that actually not the case for every child and I know that our children





have real problems with texture and color but if we may, we can expose children to a greater variety of food in a very comfortable setting hence what I said before you put them in lunchbox, and in that comfortable setting is gonna be the family sitting down for a meal together and if not, then friends, invite some of the children's friends over or other adults over and sit together and make it a non-stressful environment. This isn't about parent and child, this is the child being given the opportunity to choose whatever food they want and one of the other things I suggest is not actually putting the food on their plate, putting it at the center of the table and allowing the child control to choose what they want from the center of the table. We did that over and over again, child might not take something nutritious. But actually over the course of time you'll find that they tend to eat a wider variety of foods so that combination exposes to a wide variety of foods and comfortable social setting without stresses of the one-on-one complex. Those are what kind of foods.

B: Oh fantastic. I'm not sure that we've actually heard those, I mean apart from exposure of course but I love that idea of having a platter in the middle of the table and allowing them to, I can totally see how you can turn things and change things around by using that. Thank you. Actually, I'm salivating just thinking about the types of lunches that you might provide. Please share with us your favorite lunch box recipes or what you put in your kids' lunchbox, what you put in your own lunchbox.

J: Yeah. So what I found is in the colder months, there's things like soups are really well, or even just leftovers. That makes me feel really good, not even because I haven't had any effort in it but actually because they're having wholesome meal with loads of veggies. So heating up whatever is left over, or a soup or a noodle soup which again has lots of veggies in them but also some rice noodles, some brown rice noodles and just put that into the thermos and it keeps nice and warm until lunch time. So that's one thing that I do with the thermos and in the cooler months. And then if we think about the warmer months, really it can be as varied as having things like a dip again there's statistics to show that children are more likely to eat their veggies when they have a dip. So it could be a dip, some chopped up carrots or peppers or cucumber. Make sure they're nice and fresh, make sure they're nice and crisp and it could be some natural yoghurt and I always use natural yoghurt, I don't buy any with sugar and I recommend adding the sweetness because you won't add as much as in a commercial yoghurt. That could be in the form of something like a maple syrup, a honey or something like that. I then recommend thinking about your starch foods and your protein so it could be sandwich, a bit of that heavier whole grain bread. It could be salad, you know, some children although open to the idea of a mixed salad. It could be things like chicken or chicken drumstick so they can hold on to it not with messy hands. Also you need to think about your fruit portion so you could chop up fruits, it could be mango, it could be banana, it could be apple, it could be pears but also you could make the drink, a fruit-based drink. So simple frozen fruit, a little bit of coconut water combined in a food processor. Really hydrating, they're drinking their fruit coz not all children like the texture of fruit and that they could drink it so that's some rough ideas of the sort of things that I like to do but I do also like to bake. I would like to healthy bake so I like to bite often vegetables in cakes. Chocolate brownie is a favorite and sweet potato cake which is a gluten free cake that I make with buckwheat flour that goes down really well with loads of it. And then I make a range of different flapjacks I actually make a savory flapjack just an easy flapjack with loads of veggies in it and some eggs, some oats, herbs and some chickies and then the other flapjack I make is a no-sugar flapjack with raspberry sugar but loads of brown seeds so I use them as protein seeds, we call them pumpkin seeds. So those are the variety of different things but there's often a little baked something in there, but it's always much lower sugar than anything commercially bought and there's always real ingredients.

B: Yeah, you're a woman after Alex's and my heart, we both absolutely love baking as well and my kids like baking too and it's been a great way to get them in the kitchen, they really enjoy it, I love it, they share that love. But then they're in there so they're starting to chop up veggies as well, and they're starting to stir the casserole and really getting exposure as well. Just find a way that connects with your child and work from there, I think build from there. I think we share some of those amazing sounding recipes on our meal plan that we provide in the course so no one will miss out. But before I actually wrap up I just wondered if you have any other, I'm particularly interested in the food safety tips if you could share those with us.

J: Sure. What you put the lunchbox in is obviously very important so a really good insulated bag. There are lots of those in the market, you don't have to spend a lot of money but it does have to be an insulated bag you put it into. Then you need an appropriate number of ice packs or ice bricks. If it's really a hot day then you're gonna need certainly more than 1, you need to think about what food you're putting in to the lunch box so for example if you're putting in rice, that rice if it's just cooked, that rice has got to be cooled, and then quite quickly and then it's got to be kept cold because obviously rice can have bacteria.





B: And how do you cool it quickly?

J: Well I put it down on a surface and I will wave like put a fan at it, spread it, wave a fan at it and then get it into a container, get it into the fridge. Put it into the lunch box at the very last minute with the ice packs, put it into the insulated bags and that's really important. Obviously you need to make sure that all the food is being prepared with clean hands that you need to think about how you cook it and that you're not gonna end up with contamination of different bits and different components of the lunch box or whatever. That pretty much got to be what's cold is kept cold, if it's hot should be kept hot. And if you're all gonna be putting chicken and rice and things in the thermos you want to wash that thermos out with boiling water first and then put it back, put the food in, put the lid on and put it into the lunch box.

B: Ok great, I'm on track by the sound of things. So is there anything that you really wanna share with us before I let you go and I hope I can find you. Is there anything that we haven't covered that you think is really important for us to know.

J: I think just a sort of a conclusion to what we discussed which is that lunchboxes are really important meals and they don't have to be onerous just think about the time for your evening meals at the beginning of the week and plan your lunchboxes at the beginning of the week. If you can do some advanced preparation, baking, that sort of thing, do that at the weekend . If you plan to have some leftovers ready for the next day, then do that .so that it makes your job just a whole lot easier . But make sure that you are thinking ahead and do that thinking ahead with your children's involvement as much as possible .

B: And get them in the kitchen with you baking on the weekends.

J: Yes, exactly.

B: and down the line even if it can get messy even if they're little, it pays off.

J: And there's a little bit of math in there, don't forget, the conversion, milliliters and things like that.

B: They're learning. Math, English, science, socialization, it's got it all. Jenny, thank you so much it's been wonderful hearing all of your tips and tricks about lunchboxes and hopefully we'll see a little more effort going towards lunchboxes. I do think that they can be left behind a little bit definitely. And so for everybody doing the course can you please tell us how we can find you on social media

J: Sure, social media @lunchboxdoctor and same for instagram. The website is www.lunchboxdoctor.com

B: Fantastic. And do you consult as well by skype if anyone was interested in that

J: Yes, I do, I work with families and we basically sort through whether it's a particular ailment or just a general sort of health check. I can work for specific diet plans for those individuals concerned.

B: Thank you so much and I just want to apologize for the feedback but I'm still able to hear you I hope it turns out ok for everybody but thanks again to you.

