



Top Tips on How to Use Your Free School Meal Gift Card or Voucher

About the eGift card or voucher

If your child or children are entitled to a Free School Meal each day, you will now receive either an eGift card or voucher from your child’s school once per week, to spend in one of the supermarkets listed below. This is so that you can buy the food and drink you need to make your child’s lunch during the Coronavirus outbreak when they are not at school. This new system replaces the packed lunch that was previously given to your child(ren) each day by the school meal service.

You can choose to spend your eGift card or voucher in the following shops only:

Morrisons	ASDA
Tesco	Sainsbury’s
Waitrose	M&S

The eGift card or paper copy eGift voucher is to be spent on **food only** and is only for those children not currently attending school. If your child is still attending school, they will continue to receive their free school meal each day whilst there.

You will receive one eGift card or eGift voucher for each child entitled to a free school meal. This will normally be provided by your child’s school each week but timings may vary by school. The value of each child’s eGift card or eGift voucher is £15 per week. If you have more than one child attending the same school, you may receive one eGift card or eGift voucher for the total amount of credit you are entitled to, or you may receive separate vouchers for each child.

It is important to note that the new scheme will also operate over the Easter holidays. The rest of this document gives some ideas of the kinds of foods you could include in your shopping basket so that you can provide a healthy lunch each day to your child(ren).

Ideas for Lunch

At school, children are given a hot two-course lunch each day. At home, you may prefer instead to have a hot meal only once a day and a cold meal for lunch or dinner instead. It is also important to provide breakfast to children each day. Whatever you decide, here are some ideas of the kind of low-cost foods and drinks you could buy with your free school meal gift card or voucher which will help you provide nutritious meals for your child(ren):

Bread, tortilla wraps, flatbread, bagels	Reduced fat butter or margarine/spread
Fresh, tinned or frozen fruit and vegetables such as potatoes, onions, carrots, turnip, broccoli, tomatoes, cucumber, lettuce, apples, pears, oranges, bananas, mixed berries	Cheese

Eggs	Pasta (dry or fresh) Fresh stuffed or filled pasta
Tinned tomatoes, baked beans, soup, pasta mixes (or try making your own)	Rice
Noodles	Sliced ham, chicken or turkey or soya products (fresh or tinned)
Corned beef (sliced or tinned)	Tinned fish such as tuna or mackerel
Milk	Yogurt (try to buy low sugar yogurt)
Lentils or pulses (dried or tinned)	Tinned beans such as kidney or butter beans
Minced meat (beef, turkey, pork or chicken) or minced tofu or soya	Tofu or soya
Beef, chicken or turkey burgers	Breakfast cereal
Frozen fish fingers or fish cakes	Custard
Tinned rice pudding	Fresh orange or fruit juice (reduced sugar)
Pizza bases	Hummus or cottage cheese

These are just a few ideas of foods to get you started. There are many more. Children are given a good variety of meals at school, so if you can, try to give them as many different meals as you can during the week. Try to avoid buying lots of luxuries like sweets, cakes, biscuits and fizzy drinks. This will help to make your budget stretch further and help your child(ren) have healthy teeth and be a healthy weight.

Some examples of nutritious low-cost meals that you could serve are given below:

Savoury Lunch ideas	Puddings	Breakfast
Cheese on toast	Fresh or tinned fruit salad	Cereal and milk (ideally ready brek, Weetabix or porridge)
Pasta and tomato sauce perhaps with other vegetables, cheese or meat or tofu of your choice	Fruit crumble for example; apple crumble and custard	Toast and spread/butter
Baked potato with a filling like cheese, baked beans or tuna	A piece of fresh fruit or some canned fruit in juice	Soft boiled egg and toast/bread
Chilli con carne and rice – minced meat or meat free e.g. vegetable chilli con carne	Low sugar yogurt	Fresh or canned fruit in juice
Pizza and salad	Rice pudding (fresh or tinned)	Scrambled egg and toast/bread
Salad e.g. pasta salad, rice salad, egg salad, ham salad, tuna salad	Banana and custard	Low sugar yogurt
Fish and chips (try to limit chips to once or twice a week) Oven chips are best	Tinned peaches in juice (not syrup) and ice cream	Cereal with 125mls of fresh orange juice
Baked beans on toast	Baked apple or pear	Poached egg on toast
Sandwich or wrap containing some protein such as; meat, cheese, egg, tuna fish, tofu,	A plain biscuit (not chocolate coated)	Toasted bagel

Savoury Lunch ideas	Puddings	Breakfast
hummus and vegetables/salad		
Minced meat or soya mince, cooked with onions and tomato paste and pepper, served with boiled or mashed potatoes and fresh/tinned or cooked frozen vegetables	Ice cream sponge roll and tinned mandarins	Eggy Bread
Hot soup and bread	Rice pud with a teaspoon of low-sugar jam	Wholemeal or 50/50 bread with peanut butter
Spaghetti bolognese	Chopped apple and grapes	Low sugar yoghurt with berries
Corned beef hash (warm corned beef mixed with hot mashed potato and vegetables)	Melon slice	Cornflakes with no added sugar
Fish fingers, veg and mash	Pancakes with fruit	Scrambled egg on toast
Vegetable curry and rice	Oat biscuit and milk drink	Cereal with milk
Sausages and mash with vegetables	Cheese and crackers	Boiled egg and soldiers
Omelette (ham, cheese and or veg)	Easy-peeler clementine	Low sugar granola and milk
Cottage pie – with minced meat or meat free	Ice cream with wafer	Weetabix with milk
Meatballs and pasta	Chopped apple and pears	Instant oats with a teaspoon of honey
Beef/Veggie Burgers and salad	Fruit cocktail and custard	Warm bun with grated cheese
Hummus and vegetable sticks with pitta bread	Frozen yogurt	Wholemeal or 50/50 toast with low fat spread

There are many more meal ideas too, but the list gives you a few ideas.

Not sure how to cook?

There are many recipes and videos online which show you how to make a variety of dishes. If you have internet access you can follow along. Two of the best are:

BBC: Cooking on a Budget

https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/collections/budget_dinner_recipe_and_ideas

This gives lots of recipes with step-by-step videos for those cooking on a tight budget. Just use the search bar at the top of the page to find recipes and videos for making nutritious low-cost meals, such as scrambled eggs:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/search?q=scrambled+egg>

Change4Life Recipes

<https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes>

This website and app give lots of recipes, which are grouped into meals during the day such as; breakfast, lunch, dinner, puddings, snacks. Instructions are given on how to make each recipe, how long it will take and how difficult each recipe is.

The Change4Life App is free from the App store/Google Play store.

Other Tips

- **Write** a shopping list before you shop and don't be tempted to buy foods you do not really need. 'Buy one get one free' deals are not a bargain if you do not need them in the first place!
- **Plan** your meals for the week ahead so that your children get a good variety of foods.
- **Don't waste anything.** 'Use by' dates are the date by which foods should be eaten, but 'best before' dates are the date when foods are at their best. This does not mean they cannot be eaten after that date, just that they may not be as tasty.
- **Use any leftover meals** the next day, making sure you store them in a fridge overnight. If reheating foods, make sure they are piping hot before serving. Do not reheat cooked food more than once.
- **If you have a freezer**, it is good to know that many foods and meals can be frozen instead of throwing them out. This includes for example; fresh milk, cheese, cooked meals, raw and cooked meat and fish, many vegetables, bread. Search online if you are not sure if the food can be frozen or not.
- **Try to freeze leftovers** to use at another time if you have a freezer. Make sure you label and date the food being frozen, so you know what it is and how long it has been in the freezer. Many foods can be safely frozen for months. Thaw it thoroughly before it is used.
- **Buy cheaper supermarket own label brands** – the food often has the same taste as the more expensive brands.
- **Reduce the portion sizes served.** A child's stomach is about the size of their fist. This is the size of a portion that children should be eating. Do not be tempted to give them an adult size portion but stick to a 'Me size' meal instead. If it helps, try to serve children's meals on a smaller size plate.
- **Try to limit the number of take away meals** you have. They are often expensive and served in very big portions.
- **Try and involve your child(ren) in cooking.** They are more likely to try something new if they helped to make it.

Support: What to do if you or your family are self-isolating

If you or a family member that you live with, are in self-isolation because of Coronavirus and cannot get to the shops to buy food using the free school meal eGift card or voucher please:

- Ask a **trusted** friend, family member or neighbour, who is not self-isolating to shop for you. Make sure you give them a list of what you want them to buy. Ask them to give you the receipt and the shopping. **Always** keep at least 2metres or 6 steps away from this trusted person and **do not** let them into your home whilst you are self-isolating. Make sure you wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with hot water and soap before and after touching your shopping. Remind your trusted person to also wash their hands thoroughly too.
- If you do not have a **trusted person** or any means of support to access food or vital medication, South Tyneside Council have set up a Support Hub for those most at risk, which may be able to help you. This free service can be found at:

<https://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/69291/Support-for-residents>

Telephone: **0191 424 7575**

If you contact the Support Hub you will be asked some questions to see what kind of support you need. If it is agreed that you need support, then it will be provided.

- **It is important that you do not give your free school meal eGift card or voucher to anyone you do not know or trust.**

**If you have any other queries about the new scheme,
please contact your child's school. Thank you.**