

Healthy Eating Guide for Children

Welcome

As a mother, I understand how challenging—and sometimes frightening—it can feel to change your child's diet. If your child is already underweight, has a limited appetite, or prefers a narrow range of familiar foods, it's completely normal to worry. You might wonder:

- “If I take away the foods they love, will they eat anything at all?”
- “Will my child get enough calories to grow?”
- “What if they refuse the healthier foods I'm trying to introduce?”
- “We already have enough big emotions and conflict - I don't want to add to this”

These concerns are real and valid. That's why any dietary change we make needs to be gentle, gradual, and low-stress—for both you and your child. We want to avoid fear and pressure. We're here to build health and resilience step by step, at a pace that feels doable.

Before we get into the practical side—recipes, lunchbox ideas, meal plans, snacks, and simple swaps—I want to take a moment to explain why dietary change can be so important for children with Autism, ADHD, Trisomy 21 and other neurodiverse profiles. Understanding the why behind these changes helps reduce overwhelm and gives you confidence that these efforts are worthwhile.

Photo here - me and Rose - or me and the kids Or rob and Rose

In this guide, we'll explore:

- Which foods are essential for helping your child regulate, grow, and thrive
- Why a nourishing diet matters—not just for physical health, but for behaviour, sleep, focus, digestion, and emotional regulation
- How the gut and brain communicate, and why improving gut health often supports calmer, more settled behaviour
- How diet affects inflammation, energy, sensory tolerance, and mood
- And later, a large and practical section filled with recipes, snacks, lunchbox ideas, and breakfast solutions designed for busy families.

You are not expected to become a gourmet chef—or spend every Sunday meal-prepping. I know first hand how demanding modern family life can be, and how difficult it is to find supermarket foods that are actually supportive for neurodiverse children. What is marketed as “healthy” is often full of hidden sugars, additives, emulsifiers, and ingredients that can worsen inflammation or dysregulation.

Because your child is on a journey—from being unwell to becoming more balanced, or from being inflamed to becoming calmer—we may need the diet to be more restricted at first. This is not forever. As your child's gut heals, and as you begin to see improvements

in speech, behaviour, sleep, mood, or milestones, we can gradually experiment with relaxing the diet and observing how their body responds.

This is a journey we walk together.

And I want this guide to be a source of support, reassurance, and practical help.

Thank you for trusting me with your child's wellbeing.

I truly hope this book becomes a resource that makes the process of changing your child's diet smoother, calmer, and much more achievable.

How the Gut and Brain Talk to Each Other (and Why It Matters for Your Child)

One of the most important foundations for understanding your child's behaviour, emotions, sensory tolerance, and overall wellbeing is the gut–brain connection. The gut and the brain are in constant communication through what's known as the gut–brain axis — a powerful, bidirectional system where each influences the other.

This communication happens through three major pathways:

- Neural pathways (nerve signals, especially the vagus nerve and the HPA axis)
- Immune pathways (inflammation and immune cell signalling)
- Endocrine pathways (hormones and stress messengers)

In simple terms:

What is happening in your child's gut has a direct effect on what is happening in their brain.

Gut bacteria and inflammation

A study using germ-free mice—mice with no bacteria in their gut, found that when scientists introduced a single type of pathogenic (harmful) bacteria, they later examined the mice and found:

- A rapid increase in microglial cells in the brain
- This increase is a key marker of brain inflammation

The bacteria stayed in the gut — but the inflammation appeared in the brain within hours. This experiment demonstrated how strongly the gut can influence the nervous system.

The Gut Is a Major Part of the Immune System

About 70–80% of the immune system lives in the gut. You can think of the gut lining as a form of “border control” — constantly scanning for bacteria, viruses, toxins, and food particles that may be problematic.

When the gut detects something that feels “off,” it sends powerful alarm signals to the nervous system so the body can prepare its defences. This is helpful in the short term, but when the gut is chronically inflamed or imbalanced, it keeps the child's nervous system and brain in a constant state of alert or inflammation.

This can contribute to:

- heightened emotions
- reduced tolerance
- irritability
- hyperactivity

- sleep disruption
- difficulty with transitions
- sensory overwhelm

The Neural Pathway: Gut Health, Stress, and Emotions

One part of neural communication is the HPA axis (hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis).

This system regulates stress responses, emotions, energy, and sleep.

- When the gut is inflamed, it can activate the HPA axis, increasing stress hormones.
- This means gut problems can directly affect a child’s resilience, mood, and sleep.
- And the opposite is also true — stress can worsen gut inflammation.

Another major neural pathway is the vagus nerve, which is like a conversation line between the gut and the brain.

Importantly:

- For every 1 message the brain sends down to the gut,
- The gut sends 9 messages up to the brain.

This means the gut is the dominant communicator.

If the gut is irritated, inflamed, or imbalanced, the brain receives those distress signals constantly.

The Immune Pathway: Microbes and Microglia

The gut also communicates with the brain through the neuroimmune system.

Inside the brain are immune cells called microglia, which are responsible for:

- regulating inflammation
- supporting brain development
- pruning and maturing neural pathways
- maintaining healthy communication between brain cells

Microglia become activated when inflammatory messengers (cytokines) rise — and gut bacteria heavily influence this.

Studies show that when certain bacteria are introduced or removed:

- microglia change their activity
- inflammation in the brain can go up or down
- behavioural changes often follow

This is one of the key reasons why children with gut dysbiosis often experience:

- emotional outbursts
- low frustration tolerance
- difficulty self-regulating
- “big reactions to small problems”

Their brain is already in an inflamed and agitated state.

The Microbiome: When Good and Bad Bacteria Are Out of Balance

In many neurodiverse children, I frequently see:

- overgrowth of Candida
- overgrowth of Clostridia
- low levels of beneficial bacteria
- gut inflammation and leaky gut
- nutrient malabsorption

An unhealthy microbiome places constant stress on the gut and, in turn, on the brain.

Certain microbes produce neurotoxins, such as:

- acetaldehyde (Candida)
- ammonia
- p-cresol (Clostridia)
- lipopolysaccharides (LPS) – extremely inflammatory
- hydrogen sulfide (H₂S)

If the gut lining becomes “leaky,” these toxins can enter the bloodstream and cross the blood–brain barrier.

This often looks like:

- meltdowns seemingly out of proportion to the trigger
- difficulty coping with transitions
- emotional swings
- sensory defensiveness
- agitation or restlessness
- poor focus or brain fog

Their brain is not “misbehaving”—it is inflamed.

Liver Stress and Emotional Regulation

When the gut is inflamed, the liver has to work much harder to filter toxins.

This can overwhelm the liver, which in turn affects:

- mood stability
- emotional resilience
- irritability
- stress tolerance

For children already sensitive to sensory or emotional stimuli, this added load can make daily life feel much harder.

The Good News

When we:

- reduce pathogenic bacteria
- treat Candida
- repair the gut lining
- increase beneficial bacteria
- support detoxification
- improve nutrient absorption

...the gut becomes calmer — and the brain follows.

Parents often notice:

- better sleep
- fewer meltdowns
- improved focus and attention
- calmer mornings and evenings
- smoother transitions
- more consistent speech and communication
- more regulated emotions
- Improved sleep

This is why gut health is one of the most powerful tools we have to support neurodiverse children. And diet is the foundation of that.

The Foundations of a Healthy Eating

So what does a healthy diet look like and why is it important?

Why all the fuss about Protein?

We have three major macronutrients in our diet:

- Sugars (carbohydrates)
- Fats
- Proteins

Each of these plays a different role, but when it comes to supporting your child's growth, development, behaviour, and emotional regulation, protein is the foundation.

Sugars and fats = mostly energy

Sugars (carbs) and fats are mainly fuels. They give the body energy to move, think, play, and function through the day. They're important — but they don't build anything.

Protein = everything functional

Proteins are used for nearly every important process in the body, such as:

- hormone production
- neurotransmitter creation (the chemicals that regulate mood, behaviour, and focus)
- immune function
- enzyme activity
- detoxification
- building muscles, bones, hair, nails, organs, and connective tissue
- repairing the gut lining
- transporting nutrients
- growth and development

We often say "protein is the building block of the body," and this is especially true for children, who are growing rapidly and constantly forming new neural pathways.

Although the body is very good at recycling some proteins, children still have a much higher need because of their continuous growth and brain development.

If you only change one thing in your child's diet... make it protein at every meal, but especially breakfast.

Protein is the most stabilising nutrient you can give a child, especially one who is neurodiverse. A high-protein breakfast:

- stabilises blood sugar
- improves focus

- reduces anxiety and irritability
- decreases hyperactivity
- supports emotional regulation
- helps prevent morning meltdowns
- keeps energy steady for school
- feeds the brain the amino acids it needs for neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin

In contrast, a breakfast high in sugars or refined carbohydrates (toast, cereal, crumpets, muffins, fruit-only meals, yoghurt pouches, etc.) can lead to:

- unstable energy
- sugar spikes and crashes
- mid-morning meltdowns
- poor focus
- irritability
- ravenous hunger soon after eating

So when we begin building a healthier, gut-supportive, brain-supportive diet, protein is our first and most important step.

So what foods contain protein?

Protein rich foods - Meat, fish, eggs, nuts and seeds, beans, legumes, lentils.

Blood Sugar Regulation: Why It Matters So Much for Neurodiverse Kids

Another very important — and often overlooked — foundation of supporting your child's behaviour, focus, and emotional regulation is keeping their blood sugar stable.

Blood sugar refers to the amount of glucose (sugar) in the bloodstream. This is your child's primary source of quick energy.

The challenge is that children, especially neurodiverse children, are very sensitive to blood sugar spikes and crashes.

What Causes Blood Sugar Spikes?

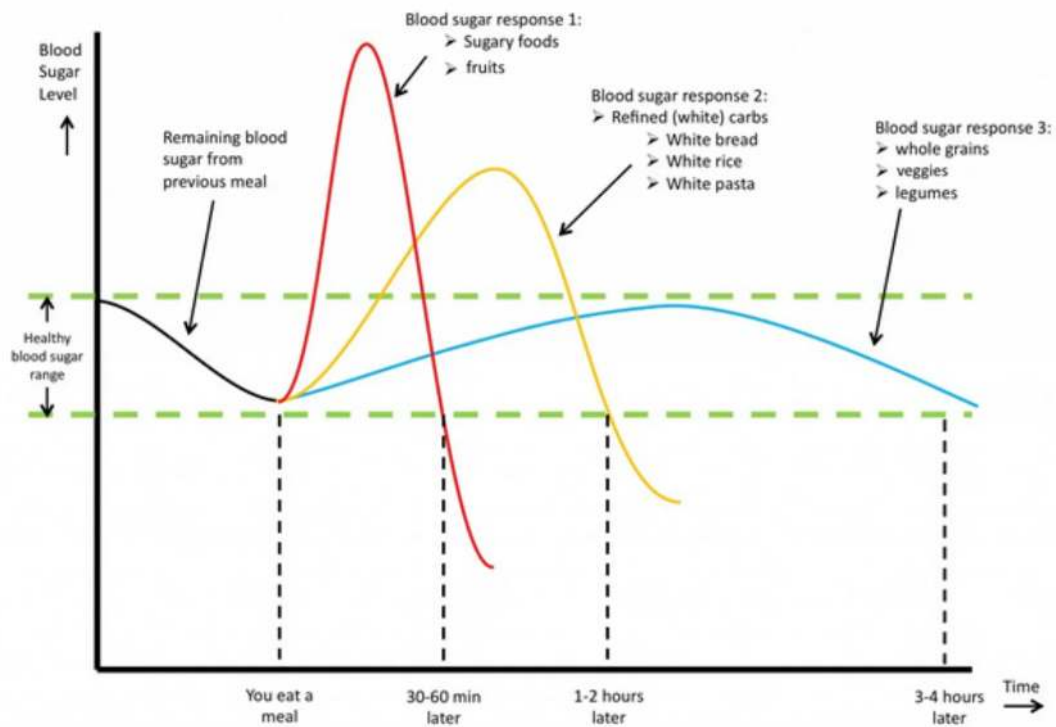
Foods that break down quickly into sugar (even if they don't taste sweet), such as:

- breakfast cereals
- toast and jam
- crumpets
- muffins
- juice
- fruit-only breakfasts

- yoghurt pouches
- white bread, rice, pasta
- sugary snacks

These foods give a fast burst of glucose, causing:

1. A rapid rise (spike) in blood sugar
2. A big insulin release to bring sugar down
3. A sudden crash — often within 60–90 minutes



What Do Blood Sugar Crashes Look Like in Children?

Parents often mistake blood sugar crashes for “behaviour issues.”

In reality, when blood sugar suddenly drops, the body releases adrenaline and cortisol — stress hormones.

This can create:

- irritability
- crying
- sudden anger
- emotional outbursts
- hyperactivity
- difficulty concentrating
- “hangry” behaviour
- anxiety or clinginess
- low tolerance for change

- morning or mid-afternoon meltdown

A child cannot regulate emotions when their body is in a chemical stress response.

Why Neurodiverse Kids Are More Sensitive

Children with Autism, ADHD, sensory challenges, or gut dysbiosis often:

- metabolise sugar differently
- have higher baseline inflammation
- have lower stress tolerance
- rely heavily on routine for emotional safety
- may already be in a “fight or flight” state due to gut-brain signalling

A sugar spike + crash can push their nervous system into overwhelm very quickly.

How Sugar Feeds Gut Dysbiosis

Sugar also feeds:

- Candida
- Clostridia
- pathogenic bacteria

These microbes produce toxins such as:

- acetaldehyde
- ammonia
- p-cresol
- LPS

These toxins worsen:

- emotional dysregulation
- brain fog
- irritability
- sleep problems
- sensory overstimulation

So stabilising blood sugar is not just about energy going up and then crashing — it directly supports gut healing and reduces neuroinflammation.

Protein + Fat = Stable Blood Sugar

The easiest way to stabilise blood sugar is to structure meals around:

- protein
- healthy fats
- fibre from vegetables or whole foods

This combination slows digestion, steadies energy, and prevents the “spike and crash” cycle.

This is why protein at breakfast sets your child up for steady energy, calmer moods, and better focus all day.

Signs Your Child's Blood Sugar Is Stable

Parents often notice:

- fewer meltdowns
- smoother transitions
- better emotional resilience
- more consistent energy
- improved focus at school
- less grazing and snacking
- calmer mornings

Even without any supplements or medications, stabilising blood sugar alone can be transformational.

Healthy Fats: Why They Matter for Your Child's Brain, Behaviour, and Gut

When we talk about healthy eating for neurodiverse kids, healthy fats are a key part of the conversation. Fat is not something to fear — in fact, the right kinds of fats are absolutely essential for your child's brain, hormones, nervous system, and overall development.

First, What Are “Healthy Fats”?

Healthy fats are fats that:

- reduce inflammation
- support brain development
- stabilise blood sugar
- help your child feel full and satisfied
- assist with the absorption of important nutrients

These include:

- Butter or ghee (if tolerated)
- Olive oil (extra virgin, used at low–medium heat or cold)
- Coconut oil
- Coconut cream and coconut milk
- Avocado + avocado oil (cold use only)
- Nuts and seeds
- Nut and seed butters (almond, peanut, tahini, sunflower seed, etc.)
- Eggs
- Animal fats from meat, ideally pasture-raised where possible
- Salmon, sardines, mackerel (rich in omega-3s)

Fats to Avoid

There are certain fats that increase inflammation and can negatively impact mood, digestion, and the nervous system:

- Margarine including nuttalex
- Hydrogenated oils
- Trans fats
- Fats from deep fried foods
- Highly processed seed oils when heated at high temperatures (sunflower, canola, soybean, safflower)

If you do use nut and/or seed oils, they must be:

- cold pressed,
- unrefined,
- and never heated.

These oils become unstable when heated and can contribute to inflammation in the gut and brain.

Why Healthy Fats Are So Important for Children

The Brain Is Made Mostly of Fat

Around 60% of the human brain is fat, and it relies heavily on omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids for:

- memory
- learning
- focus
- emotional regulation
- sensory processing

Children's brains are still developing, so they have a particularly high need for high-quality fats.

Essential Fatty Acids Reduce Inflammation

Omega-3 fats (from fish, eggs, nuts, seeds) have a well-documented anti-inflammatory effect on the brain.

They support:

- calmer behaviour
- improved mood
- better sleep
- reduced irritability
- improved ADHD symptoms
- healthier neurological development

Research shows that children with ADHD, Autism, and learning challenges often have lower baseline omega-3 levels.

The Balance Between Omega-6 and Omega-3 Matters

We need both, but:

- most modern diets contain too much omega-6 (from processed snacks, refined oils, fast foods)
- and not enough omega-3

Too much omega-6 creates inflammation in the body and the brain.

By reducing processed oils and increasing omega-3s, we can help shift this ratio into a healthier, calmer range.

Healthy Fats Stabilise Blood Sugar

When fats are eaten with carbohydrates (like fruit or wholefood snacks):

- digestion slows
- blood sugar stays stable
- energy becomes more even
- meltdowns and “crashes” become less frequent

For neurodiverse kids, this stability can make a huge difference in:

- emotional regulation
- attention
- behaviour
- sensory sensitivity

Fats Help Nutrient Absorption

Certain vitamins — A, D, E, and K — require fat to be absorbed.

Without enough fat in the diet, children may miss out on nutrients important for:

- immunity
- bone health
- brain development
- wound healing
- growth

Fats Keep Kids Full and Satisfied

Children who “graze” constantly or are always hungry often aren’t getting enough protein and fat.

Healthy fats help:

- extend satiety
- reduce constant snacking
- support stable energy
- encourage better meal patterns

In Summary Healthy fats:

- calm inflammation
- support the brain
- steady mood and emotions
- help regulate blood sugar
- nourish growth and development
- are essential for gut lining repair
- improve nutrient absorption

This is why incorporating healthy fats at every meal — especially breakfast and lunch — is a powerful step in supporting your child's wellbeing.

Colourful Vegetables & Fibre: Feeding the Gut, Supporting the Brain

Support your child's gut health by including a wide range of colourful vegetables and fibre-rich foods in their diet. These are not just "good for you" — they play a major role in:

- reducing inflammation
- feeding beneficial gut bacteria
- supporting detoxification
- stabilising blood sugar
- improving bowel habits
- nourishing the immune system
- supporting emotional regulation

Why Colour Matters

Different coloured vegetables contain different phytonutrients — natural plant compounds that help the body and brain thrive.

Eat the rainbow throughout the week.

Each colour family offers unique benefits:

Colour	Examples	Key Benefits
Red	tomatoes, strawberries, beetroot	antioxidant, supports heart and brain
Orange / Yellow	carrots, sweet potato, pumpkin	supports vision, immune system
Green	broccoli, spinach, zucchini, lettuce	minerals, detox support, folate
Purple / Blue	blueberries, eggplant	anti-inflammatory, brain protection, antioxidant

White / Brown	cauliflower, mushrooms, onions	immune support, prebiotics
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You don't need every colour every day — just aim across the week.

Fibre Feeds the Microbiome

Fibre is food for beneficial gut bacteria. When friendly microbes eat fibre, they produce short-chain fatty acids like:

- butyrate
- propionate
- acetate

These compounds:

- reduce inflammation in the gut
- heal the gut lining
- protect the brain
- support mood and focus
- stabilise immune function

Children with gut dysbiosis, Candida, or Clostridia often have low levels of good bacteria — fibre helps rebuild the microbiome.

What Types of Fibre Do We Want?

We want a combination of:

- insoluble fibre (adds bulk, helps bowel movements)
- soluble fibre (gels, slows digestion, feeds bacteria)

Soluble fibre is particularly helpful for emotional regulation and gut health.

Good sources include:

- vegetables
- fruit (with skin where tolerated)
- chia seeds
- psyllium husk (very gentle)
- nuts and seeds
- coconut products
- legumes (if tolerated — later stage, low oxalate considerations)
- Nuts and seeds

But My Child Won't Eat Vegetables...

Please know this is extremely common in neurodiverse children.

Sensory preferences, textures, and routines can make vegetables difficult.

There are many ways to increase intake without forcing:

- blend vegetables into soups and sauces. If making a bolognaise I blend all the vegetables.
- add grated zucchini or carrot into meatballs/burgers
- blend pumpkin or spinach into pasta sauce
- make smoothies with spinach, berries, chia
- roast vegetables for sweetness and softer texture
- use dips (hummus, tahini, guacamole)
- offer crunchy raw veg for sensory seekers
- keep exposure gentle and consistent
- Keep trying and never assume your child won't like something. I have seen a very fussy eaters devour a can of sardines when offered.
- Try different forms - my kids hate roasted pumpkin, but pumpkin soup is one of their favourites.

You do not need perfection — just steady, low-stress exposure.

Vegetables & Fibre Help with Detoxification

The body produces waste products every day:

- microbial toxins
- hormones
- chemicals
- food byproducts

Fibre helps bind and eliminate these through the bowels.

This is crucial for children with:

- constipation
- Candida overgrowth
- Clostridia
- high oxalates
- behavioural dysregulation

When bowels move well, children often feel calmer and more regulated.

Fibre Helps Stabilise Blood Sugar

When fibre is eaten with carbohydrates, it:

- slows digestion
- reduces sugar spikes and crashes
- supports steady energy and mood

This is especially helpful for children prone to:

- emotional outbursts
- mid-afternoon meltdowns

- constant hunger
- hyperactivity

Colourful vegetables and fibre:

- feed beneficial gut bacteria
- calm inflammation
- help the brain function better
- reduce behavioural and emotional volatility
- support detoxification and bowel movements
- stabilise blood sugar
- nourish growth and development

Offer vegetables at every meal, even if your child doesn't eat them every time. Routine and exposure matter more than the amount.

Your child may respond better to a selection of vegetables in individual dishes eg. raw carrots in one, cucumber in another, steamed broccoli in another etc. to which they can help themselves. If there are one or two vegetable your child likes, offer these often. At dinner include as an option with some veg your child doesn't like yet.

Why We Are Not Promoting Fruit (as a Primary Food)

Fruit is not “bad” — it is a natural, whole food with vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fibre.

However, when we are working with children who have:

- Autism
- ADHD
- sensory and emotional regulation challenges
- gut dysbiosis
- Candida or Clostridia overgrowth
- high oxalates
- frequent meltdowns or irritability

...we need to be more thoughtful about how much fruit they are eating and when they are eating it.

Fruit = Sugar

Even though fruit is natural, it is still mostly sugar:

- fructose
- glucose

These sugars:

- digest quickly
- raise blood sugar rapidly
- can feed dysbiotic organisms

When a child has an inflamed gut, fruit sugars can worsen:

- bloating
- gas
- behavioural instability
- yeast and bacteria overgrowth

Fruit Alone = Blood Sugar Spikes and Crashes

Most children eat fruit on its own:

- a banana
- grapes
- apple slices
- fruit pouches
- fruit bars
- dried fruit

This causes a very fast rise in blood sugar, followed by a rapid crash.

The crash is where we see:

- crying
- irritability
- anger
- poor focus
- "hangry" behaviour
- meltdowns

This is not a behavioural issue — it is a chemically driven stress response due to blood sugar instability.

Fruit Without Protein = Not Ideal

Fruit is best eaten:

With protein or healthy fat - (for example: apple + nut butter, berries + coconut yoghurt, banana and handful of nuts, sliced apple with sliced cheese. Fruit and nuts)

This slows digestion and reduces spikes.

Fruit with protein and fats = good eg fruit and nuts

Fruit and Dysbiosis

In children with gut dysbiosis, fruit sugar can feed:

- Candida
- Clostridia
- sulfur bacteria
- other opportunistic microbes

This increases toxins like:

- acetaldehyde
- ammonia
- p-cresol
- hydrogen sulfide

These toxins travel to the brain and worsen:

- hyperactivity
- emotional reactivity
- sensory overwhelm
- poor sleep

So while fruit is natural, in the context of dysbiosis,

Too much fruit = inflammation.

Oxalates

Many high-fruit diets are also high in oxalates (strawberries, kiwi, figs, blueberries).

In children with impaired oxalate metabolism, this can cause:

- rashes
- pain
- urinary issues
- gut irritation
- worsen sensory behaviour

We are often supporting high oxalate children, so caution is wise.

We Don't Need to Remove Fruit

We simply change how we use it:

- Fruit is not the main part of the diet
- Fruit is eaten with protein or fat
- Fruit is not used alone as snacks between meals
- Fruit is not a replacement for vegetables
- Choose low-sugar fruits (berries) over high-sugar (bananas, grapes)

Fruit Is Not a “Free” Food

But for our kids:

- Fructose = sugar
- Sugar = dysbiosis
- Dysbiosis = inflammation
- Inflammation = emotional dysregulation

A good ratio is:

5 servings vegetables : 2 servings fruit

We’re not promoting fruit because we need to prioritise protein, healthy fats, and vegetables for brain and gut health. Fruit is a sometimes food, not a foundation food.

Fruit is perfectly fine in small amounts and with the right foods, but it is not where we start.

Hydration: Why Water Matters More Than You Think

Hydration is one of the simplest and most effective ways to support your child’s health, mood, and behaviour — yet it’s often overlooked. Many children, especially neurodiverse children, go through their day mildly dehydrated, and this can have a surprisingly strong impact on how they feel and function.

Why Hydration Matters

Water is essential for:

- healthy digestion
- bowel movements
- brain function
- concentration
- energy
- detoxification
- temperature regulation
- lubrication of joints and tissues

Even mild dehydration can lead to:

- irritability
- headaches
- fatigue
- poor focus
- constipation

- dry skin
- dizziness
- emotional dysregulation

A dehydrated brain is a stressed brain.

Signs of Dehydration in Kids

Parents may notice:

- dark or strong-smelling urine
- less frequent urination
- dry lips
- crankiness or tears
- headaches
- tiredness
- constipation
- dizziness when standing up
- asking for food frequently (thirst mistaken for hunger)

Some children don't recognise thirst well, so they need encouragement and routine around drinking.

Why Neurodiverse Children Are More Prone to Dehydration

Many children on the spectrum or with ADHD:

- have sensory aversions to texture or taste of water
- forget to drink when focused
- prefer sweet or flavoured beverages
- may have constipation or bowel irregularities
- have higher baseline inflammation or metabolic needs

So hydration often needs active support from parents.

What Should Children Be Drinking?

The goal is:

Water, all day, every day

The best choices are:

- filtered water
- sparkling water/soda water (unsweetened)
- herbal teas (mint, chamomile, rooibos)
- broths or bone broth (especially for fussy eaters)

Avoid daily consumption of:

- juice
- cordial
- sports drinks
- milky drinks
- soft drinks
- flavoured waters
- caffeinated teas

These spike blood sugar, irritate the gut, and make hydration more difficult.

How Much Water Does a Child Need?

A simple rule for parents:

Your child needs about 6–8 cups (1.5–2 litres) per day (depending on age, weight, activity, and weather). On hot days or with exercise, they will need more.

Tips to Increase Hydration (Without a Fight)

- Give water first thing in the morning
- Use a favourite water bottle they enjoy
- Offer water before snacks
- Use straws for sensory-seeking children
- Add slices of lemon, orange, cucumber, berries
- Serve herbal teas warm or iced
- Offer broth with meals
- Make “water breaks” part of the day
- Add ice to water or allow them to chew on ice

The goal is gentle and consistent, not forceful.

Hydration Helps the Gut & Brain Work Better

Good hydration supports:

- bowel regularity
- detoxification (less load on liver)
- lymphatic drainage
- mucous membranes
- absorption of nutrients
- calmer behaviour and mood
- better concentration

A child who is hydrated is often calmer, clearer, and more comfortable.

What about water quality?

Why Water Quality Matters (Filtered Water & Chlorine)

When we talk about hydration, it's not just how much water our children drink — it's also what's in that water.

Most tap water is treated with chlorine to keep it safe from harmful microbes. Chlorine is useful from a public health point of view, but it can have unwanted effects when we're looking at gut health and the microbiome, especially in children who are already vulnerable.

Chlorine Can Impact the Gut Microbiome

Chlorine is designed to kill bacteria, which is helpful for water treatment.

But inside the body:

- it can reduce beneficial gut bacteria
- it may increase oxidative stress
- it can irritate the gut lining in some sensitive children

Children with Autism, ADHD, Trisomy 21 or gut dysbiosis often already have:

- low good bacteria
- high inflammation
- higher oxidative stress
- reduced detoxification capacity

So reducing extra exposure to chlorine can be beneficial.

Chlorine Can Irritate the Gut Lining

In sensitive children, regular exposure to chlorine may contribute to:

- tummy pain
- constipation or diarrhoea
- bloating
- gas
- reduced nutrient absorption

A calm, healthy gut lining is essential for:

- emotional regulation
- immune function
- detoxification
- nutrient absorption
- brain health (via the gut–brain axis)

Anything that irritates the gut lining can make healing harder.

Skin Absorption Also Matters

Chlorine is not just swallowed in drinking water.

Children absorb chlorine through:

- baths
- showers
- swimming pools

This can contribute to:

- dry, itchy skin
- rashes or eczema
- red or irritated eyes
- chemical smell on hair/skin

Sensitive children often benefit greatly from reducing this exposure.

Filtered Water Is the Best Choice

Good-quality filtration helps remove:

- chlorine
- chloramines
- heavy metals
- pesticides
- microplastics

Filtered water tastes better, which means children drink more of it, and it supports:

- gut healing
- healthy microbiome
- detoxification
- overall wellbeing

You do not need an expensive system. Options include:

- benchtop gravity filters (carbon / ceramic)
- under-sink filters
- fridge water filters
- whole-house systems (for baths and showers)

Even a simple jug-style filter is better than nothing.

When possible, choose filtered water for drinking and cooking, because it's an easy way to reduce extra load on the gut. Also as water is consumed regularly daily - it can have a big impact.

Why Gluten & Dairy Are Often Removed

When we begin improving a child's gut health, nervous system stability, and behaviour, two of the most powerful dietary changes we make are removing gluten and dairy. These foods are not harmful for everyone, but they can be very aggravating for sensitive children — especially those with gut or immune issues, neurodiversity, or emotional dysregulation.

Why Gluten Is Removed

I recommend removing gluten very early in the process, because in my clinical experience, gluten often creates inflammation in the gut and agitation in the nervous system.

I have worked as a naturopath for over 13 years and an allergy specialist for 10 years, and I have seen this so consistently that it has become a key part of my initial protocol.

Two main improvements often happen when we remove gluten:

- digestion improves
- the nervous system becomes calmer

Gluten has a strong affinity for the nervous system. I clinically see this:

A young woman in her twenties, eating well, exhausted, low mood, no energy.

We remove gluten — two weeks later she feels brighter, calmer, and her energy returns.

In other cases, parents notice that their children are:

- moody
- irritable
- more prone to anger or agitation
- Less regulated in general

When gluten is removed, the whole system feels calmer and more regulated.

Gluten, Inflammation & Leaky Gut

One reason gluten is such a problem is that it can increase production of zonulin — a protein that regulates the tight junctions between the cells of the gut lining.

You can think of tight junctions as small doors between the cells. They are supposed to stay tightly closed to prevent large food particles, toxins, and microbes from entering the bloodstream.

When zonulin increases, those doors open more easily, and the gut becomes more permeable ("leaky gut"). This can lead to:

- food reactions
- immune activation
- inflammation
- behavioural changes
- skin flares

- fatigue

Why Dairy Is Removed

Dairy is the second food group we commonly remove. Again, not because dairy is “bad,” but because in sensitive children it can be highly inflammatory.

There are two parts of dairy that can cause issues:

Lactose (the sugar in milk)

To digest lactose, the body needs an enzyme called lactase, which lives on the brush border of the small intestine.

If children have gut inflammation, they often don’t make enough lactase. The lactose molecule stays in the gut and can:

- feed bad bacteria and Candida
- increase gas and bloating
- cause loose stools
- increase inflammation

For these children, removing lactose brings enormous relief.

Casein (the protein in milk)

Casein is a very large, complex protein and it can be quite aggravating to the immune and nervous systems. When casein is not digested properly, parts of it can act like exorphins — opioid-like compounds that affect brain chemistry.

This can lead to:

- foggy thinking
- mood instability
- emotional dysregulation
- hyperactivity or low energy
- cravings for dairy foods

Some children become very attached to dairy — not because they love the taste, but because the proteins have a drug-like effect in the brain.

Dairy & Sinuses

Dairy also has a strong affinity for the sinuses and respiratory system.

It is very common to see dairy intolerance associated with:

- mucus
- blocked nose
- mouth breathing
- snoring
- recurrent respiratory infections
- ear congestion

When we remove dairy, many families notice:

- clearer breathing
- less snoring
- fewer infections
- better sleep

Butter and ghee are generally tolerated because they contain very little casein or lactose, but some children can still react to milk fats — we take this on a case-by-case basis.

This is not forever. Once the gut has healed and the child is more stable, we may gently test whether small amounts of these foods can be tolerated. Ultimately we would like your child to be able to enjoy these foods sometimes. For now, removing gluten and dairy gives us the best chance of lowering inflammation, healing the gut, and supporting a calmer, happier child.

The Good, the Bad & the Ugly of Gluten-Free Products

When we remove gluten from a child's diet, many families naturally look for gluten-free versions of what they were already eating — especially bread. This is understandable, but it's important to know that many gluten-free products are not automatically healthier.

In fact, some gluten-free breads and snacks are more processed, more refined, and have the potential to cause inflammation similar but not as bad as the original wheat products.

The Problem With Most Gluten-Free Products

Many supermarket gluten-free products:

- are made from refined starches (rice flour, tapioca starch, potato starch, corn starch)
- have very little protein or fibre
- spike blood sugar quickly
- contain emulsifiers, gums and preservatives
- can aggravate gut inflammation
- feed dysbiosis and Candida
- may contribute to behavioural crashes or meltdowns
- Contain high amounts of maize or corn starch - which is generally genetically modified. We don't understand the consequences of this, so best to avoid.

So while they are gluten-free, they are not necessarily gut-friendly or neuro-friendly.

Refined Gluten-Free Bread vs. Sourdough or Wholemeal

A high-quality traditional sourdough or wholemeal bakery loaf, though it contains gluten, is often:

- higher in fibre
- fermented (making it easier to digest)
- lower in additives

- slower to spike blood sugar

Many gluten-free breads are the opposite:

- refined starches
- little fibre
- many additives
- big blood sugar swings

So the goal is not to simply swap wheat bread for any gluten-free bread, but to choose gluten-free products that are simple, stable, and nourishing.

Ingredients to Watch Out For

When choosing gluten-free breads, look at the ingredient list.

Try to avoid breads where the first ingredients are starches, especially:

- corn starch
- potato starch
- tapioca starch
- modified starch
- gums
- emulsifiers - generally increase leaky gut and gut inflammation
- preservatives - can have negative impact on the nervous system
- vegetable oils - poor quality and also inflammatory

Also be mindful of corn. Most corn in Australia is genetically modified (the negative impacts of which we do not understand yet) and corn starch tends to spike blood sugar and feed dysbiosis.

Ingredients That Are Better

Better gluten-free breads tend to use:

- whole grains (buckwheat, sorghum, millet)
- seeds
- nut flours (almond meal)
- psyllium or flax for structure
- minimal additives

These breads are usually found:

- in specialty bakeries
- health food stores
- freezer sections

My General Rule for Parents

If the ingredient list looks like a science experiment, it's probably not helping your child.

Brands I Lik

When Gluten-Free Bread Is Useful

Gluten-free bread can still be helpful, especially when:

- transitioning to a new way of eating
- supporting emotional safety
- packing school lunches
- needing a familiar texture or routine

We simply want to choose the best options — not the most processed ones.

Why This Matters

Poor-quality gluten-free products can:

- spike blood sugar
- fuel dysbiosis
- contribute to inflammation
- make behaviour worse
- prevent gut healing

Good-quality gluten-free products:

- support energy and mood
- stabilise blood sugar
- are easier on the gut
- contain fewer additives

You do not have to get everything perfect straight away.

We start with:

1. Removing gluten
2. Using the cleanest gluten-free products we can find or that your child will eat. So there is some trial and error here.
3. We can use less quality products while we transition. But aiming for better quality over time.
4. Slowly introducing more whole foods and better quality gluten free products over time

Gluten-free eating should not be stressful — we just want to avoid swapping one problem for another.

Gluten Free Bread options

Best Quality

Brand/Product	Notes
Strange Grains Yeast-Free Buckwheat Sourdough	Wholegrain buckwheat first, olive oil, psyllium, no yeast
Strange Grains Yeast-Free Multiseed / Rustic	Seeds, psyllium, olive oil, yeast-free
Strange Grains Yeast-Free Pumpkin Rustic	Pumpkin, psyllium, olive oil
Strange Grains Yeast-Free Olive Rustic	Olive, olive oil, therapeutic
Strange Grains Champion	Whole buckwheat sourdough, no preservatives
Strange Grains Sprouted Quinoa	Sprouted quinoa, psyllium, EVOO
Venerdi Low Carb Goodness	Grain-free, seeds, resistant starch, excellent fats
Venerdi Super Seeded Paleo	27% seeds, almond meal, eggs, very nutrient-dense
Venerdi Almond & Linseed	Whole foods, almond, linseed, sweet potato
Venerdi Grain-Free Paleo Loaves	Cassava/coconut flour base, EVOO
Gluten Free Precinct – Buckwheat & Chia	True sourdough, psyllium, olive oil
Gluten Free Precinct – Quinoa & Soya	Seeds, whole flours
Gluten Free Precinct – Sprouted Loaf	Sprouted beans/seeds
Gluten Free Precinct – Market Loaf	Besan/amaranth, olive oil
Gluten Free Precinct Wraps (all)	Buckwheat, chia, veg powders, psyllium
Gluten Free Precinct Crumbs	Clean, wholefood

Good (Better Supermarket Options)

Fine for regular use during transition. Still better when paired with protein + fat. You still want to be aiming towards the list of breads above. I save some of these for sandwiches and French toast (eggy bread as they are softer and absorb the egg nicely). These are not everyday breads.

Brand/Product	Notes
Helga's GF Wholemeal	Some wholemeal content, psyllium
Tip Top GF Wholemeal	Mix of wholegrain flours, starch-based
Well & Good Wholemeal	Mix of flours, psyllium, some sunflower oil
Activated Seeds Loaf	Seeds present, but base is starches
Organic Sourdough (29%)	Sourdough + wholefoods, but starch & gums
Abbotts GF Wholemeal / Seeded / Sourdough	Acceptable transition breads

OK, for transition only (Use Short-Term)

Often chosen because familiar and tolerated. Not gut-healing and not ideal daily.

Brand/Product	Notes
Gluten-Free Pizza Bases (most brands)	Starch-dominant, gums, occasional use fine
Burger Buns & Dinner Rolls (non-buckwheat)	More processing, fluffiness from gums
Woolworths Free-From GF	Starch base, gums, preservatives
Coles GF Breads	Variable, mostly refined starch
All other gluten free breads that are not listed as wholemeal.	
Warburton's tiger loaf	
Aldi's gf wholemeal and all other loaves.	

Bad/Avoid (If possible)

Starch-only base, seed oils, gums, preservatives, blood sugar spikes, little nutrition, inflammatory.

Brand/Product	Notes
Tip Top GF White	Starch, seed oils, gums, preservatives
Cheap GF supermarket white breads	Tapioca/corn starch base
Breads with canola oil as first fat	Inflammatory
GF breads with multiple gums (464, 466, 412)	Irritating for sensitive guts
Products with preservatives (200, 202)	Gut and behaviour concerns
High sugar GF breads	Blood sugar & candida issues
Highly processed wraps with emulsifiers	No therapeutic benefit

Summary about breads

Best breads are made from whole foods like buckwheat, cassava, seeds, nuts, eggs, or sprouted ingredients.

They use olive oil, not seed oils, and contain psyllium for gut health.

These breads help with stable blood sugar, calmer behaviour, better mood and gut healing.

Transition breads can be useful while we are changing diet, but they are still made mostly from starches and can spike blood sugar.

Avoid white gluten-free breads which offer no nutrition and often worsen gut and behaviour.

Breakfast

Breakfast is one of the most important meals of the day for children, especially for those who are neurodiverse or working through gut, mood, or behaviour challenges. The goal of breakfast is not simply to “fill a tummy”; it is to set up the nervous system, blood sugar, and brain for the day ahead.

What a good breakfast needs to include

A therapeutic breakfast for children should prioritise:

Protein

Protein is essential for:

- stable blood sugars
- healthy neurotransmitters (dopamine, serotonin, GABA)
- focus and attention
- building growing bodies
- feel full for longer

Children are rapidly growing — they need more protein than adults per kilogram of body weight. Overnight they have had no food, so their blood sugar and glycogen stores are low. Protein in the morning:

- stops sugar cravings
- reduces meltdowns
- improves resilience

If you only change one thing, add protein.

Healthy fats

Healthy fats give children:

- longer-lasting energy
- stable mood and behaviour
- brain nourishment (myelination, cell membranes)
- calmer, more grounded nervous systems

Good fats also keep food in the stomach longer, which slows digestion and supports more stable blood sugars over the morning.

Examples of healthy fats:

- eggs
- avocado
- coconut oil
- nuts & seeds
- olive oil
- fatty fish

- meats (sausages, bacon — aim for preservative and gluten free)

Fibre

Fibre is essential for:

- bowel regularity
- microbiome diversity
- reducing inflammation
- feeling full and satisfied

You can get fibre from:

- vegetables
- chia, linseed, psyllium
- buckwheat, quinoa
- berries
- seeds and nuts
- Legumes and lentils

Low starch / low sugar

Many typical children's breakfasts are mostly starch and sugar:

- toast + jam
- cereal
- muffins
- banana + yoghurt
- smoothie bowls
- pancakes

These foods cause a blood sugar spike and crash → leading to:

- irritability
- short fuse
- poor focus
- emotional volatility
- cravings before 10am

Instead, we want slow energy release.

Why this matters for neurodiverse kids

Neurodiverse children are often already sitting in a slightly elevated stress or inflammatory state. Their brain and body may be more sensitive to:

- sugar swings
- hunger
- sensory overload

A high-protein, high-fat breakfast helps to:

- calm the nervous system
- increase resilience to transitions
- reduce emotional overwhelm
- reduce aggression or agitation
- support learning and attention

It is not unusual for parents to report:

“When we switched to protein breakfasts, the school day became easier.”

What a therapeutic breakfast looks like

We're looking at:

- eggs, meats, smoked salmon
- avocado
- vegetables
- nuts and seeds
- coconut yoghurt (no added sugar)
- buckwheat or grain-free breads
- chia puddings
- leftovers from dinner

What to avoid at breakfast

Avoid foods that are:

- high in sugar
- highly refined
- cereal based
- bread-based without protein
- quick-digesting starches

The most common problem foods:

- cold cereal
- toast + jam
- pancakes without protein
- fruit smoothies without protein
- “healthy” muffins
- banana on its own
- fruit + yoghurt

These spike blood sugars, feed dysbiosis, and make the morning harder than it needs to be.

Behaviour connection

A protein-rich, wholefood breakfast will often lead to:

- clearer thinking
- improved focus
- easier transitions
- fewer meltdowns
- more emotional resilience

Breakfas t Recipes

Lets start with some of the staples in my house for breakfast - on school mornings you want breakfast to be eaten, easy and nutritious.

Homemade Muesli Recipe

This version is:

- high fibre
- high protein
- low sugar
- totally customisable
- great for kids

Ingredients

3 cups gluten-free rolled oats (or buckwheat flakes)

½ cup coconut flakes

¼ cup chia seeds

¼ cup sunflower seeds

¼ cup pumpkin seeds

¼ cup linseed/flaxseed (whole or ground)

Nuts (optional):

- ½ cup almonds OR walnuts OR macadamias, roughly chopped

Extras (optional):

- cinnamon
- hemp seeds
- cacao nibs
- dried fruit (sparingly: sultanas, cranberries, apricots)

Tip:

Dried fruit = sugar and preservative. Only add if preservative free and keep minimal.

Toasted version (more delicious and digestible)

1. Preheat oven to 150°C.
2. Spread mixture on a baking tray.
3. Bake 10–12 mins, stirring once, until lightly golden.
4. Cool completely and store in an airtight jar.

To serve:

- soak as per directions below
- serve with yoghurt/coconut yoghurt + fruit

Optional Add-Ons for Kids

To increase protein and fats, add any of these at serving time:

- scoop of collagen or protein powder
- Greek/coconut yoghurt
- nut butter
- nuts & seeds
- coconut cream
- sliced avocado (yes, some kids love it!)

Why it's best to soak oats overnight

Oats are a beautiful wholefood but they contain natural compounds (phytates) that can:

- interfere with mineral absorption (iron, zinc, magnesium)
- make oats harder to digest
- create gas and bloating in sensitive children

Soaking begins a natural fermentation process that makes oats:

- easier to digest
- gentler on the gut
- more nutrient-available
- less likely to cause bloating or constipation
- supportive of the microbiome

Soaking also Improves blood sugar response

Dry oats spike blood glucose faster.

Soaked oats digest slower, providing:

- more stable energy
- fewer mid-morning crashes

- calmer moods and behaviour

Basic Overnight Soaked Oats

I like to just use the homemade muesli.

Ingredients

1 serving of homemade muesli or oats

1 tbsp lemon juice OR 1 tsp apple cider vinegar (important!)

Plant based milk,

Method

Mix everything in a bowl or jar.

Cover and leave overnight in the fridge.

In the morning, add:

- yoghurt, coconut cream, berries, nuts, cinnamon, etc.

Notes:

- The acid is what reduces phytates — don't skip it.
- Texture is soft and pudding-like, not mushy if rolled oats are used.

Eggs anyway and Healthy GF Toast

I don't need to add a recipe here. Classic scrambled, fried, pouched, boiled egg is always a great start to the day. Side by side with a healthy slice strange grains, gluten free precinct or venerdi paleo bread and it had healthy fats, protein and fibre. Add avocado for more fibre and fats.

Chia

These are one of my families favourite breakfasts. It's super quick, very easy and incredibly nutritious. Chia seeds are high in protein, calcium and fibre. As well as providing essential fatty acids, magnesium, potassium and iron. These puddings will keep in the fridge for 4 days. In the winter I mix with a plant based milk and warm on the stove so it is more of a chia porridge. I might add fruit to the pot like apple or pear and cook to soften and warm. Always serving with protein rich granola, or nuts and seeds or add a protein or collagen powder.

Banana Choc Chia Pudding

Ingredients

1/2 cup chia seeds
4Tbsp raw cacao powder
1/2 tsp cinnamon
2 cups almond milk, unsweetened
1/2 tsp vanilla extract
1 Tbsp maple syrup
2 medium ripe bananas, mashed

Optional add in - 3 Tbl collagen or hemp protein powder for extra protein

Method

Whisk the dry ingredients (chia seeds, cacao powder, cinnamon) together in a large container or bowl. then, add the almond milk, vanilla, maple syrup, and mashed bananas to the dry ingredients. Whisk everything till all combined or add all ingredients to a blender and gently blend on low for 5min.

Cover and refrigerate the container or bowl for a minimum of 20 minutes, (or overnight). the Chia pudding will thicken during this time. Once the chia pudding has thickened,

pour it into your blender and blend until smooth - I do 2 minutes high speed. this step is optional, but I love how smooth and moose like it makes the pudding!

Will last in a sealed container in the fridge for up to 4 days.

Serving suggestion - Serve with granola (protein), unsweetened coconut yoghurt (healthy fats) and fresh fruit (Fibre, vitamins and antioxidants).

Chia Pudding

Ingredients

1/4 cup of chia seeds

3/4 cup of coconut milk, coconut water or plant based milk

Berries and fruit to garnish

2 Tbls mixed seeds - sesame, pepita, sunflower and coconut flakes or granola (see below)

Method

Combine the chia seeds and liquid in a glass or jar and stir for 20 seconds. let it sit and then give it another stir or shake it every minute for about 5 minutes., set aside for at least 20 minutes, or overnight. It should thicken to a mouse like consistency. top with coconut yoghurt, fruit and nuts, seeds or granola.

Optional add in - add 1 scoop of collagen for extra protein.



Eggy Bread - Healthy French Toast

Ingredients

1 egg

1 Slice gf bread (this works better with a softer gf bread - like Abbotts GF wholemeal)

Small amount honey

Method

Whisk the egg, place the bread in the egg and allow to soak up the egg. Turn bread over after 1 minute and soak on other side until all egg is soaked into the bread.

Heat frying pan, med heat, add coconut oil or butter and place eggy bread in frying pan. Turn done to almost low and cook for 1-2 minutes before turning. Cook for another two minutes, till golden brown. Flip again if needed.

Remove from pan and apply honey to one side. Can be eaten like this or with fruit and yoghurt.

Paleo bread with peanut butter or avocado

This Venerdi paleo bread is high in protein and full of seeds for fibre and fats. So it is an easy go to - even if you just put butter on it, it is still nutrient dense. Add something healthy like nut butter or avocado and it is a decent, quick easy breakfast.

Ingredients

Venerdi super seeded paleo bread

Peanut or other nut butter

Or

Avocado

Method

Toast bread and add spread

Weekends or Treats

Banana Pancakes

These pancakes are very quick and easy to make. Left overs make a good lunch box snack and the ingredients are something I generally always have on hand - so they are a breakfast staple in my house. You can also make a big batch and keep in the fridge to use over a few days.

Ingredients

- 1 cup almonds or gluten free oats (if tolerated)
- 2 Tbl tapioca starch/flour
- 1/4 cup unsweetened almond milk
- 2 eggs
- 1 ripe banana, more to serve
- 1 tsp gluten free baking powder
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- Unflavoured coconut oil for frying
- 1-2 tbsp raw honey or maple syrup, to serve

Optional extra - 1 cup blueberries - frozen wild or organic

Optional add 1 Tbl hemp powder for extra protein

Method

Place the oats or almonds in a blender and blend for about 10 seconds so that they look like flour. Add all other ingredients (except berries if using) blend until smooth. Add more almond milk if needed to get a thick but pourable consistency. Once blended add the blueberries and mix in.

Cook for 2-3 min on each side, medium/low heat

Top with berries, mango, banana and unsweetened coconut yoghurt for a delicious healthy breakfast.

Gluten Free Crepes

Ingredients

60g tapioca
60g cup brown rice flour or oats
60g of buckwheat flour or almonds
3 eggs
200ml of plant based milk
juice of half a lemon

Unflavoured Coconut oil for frying

Method

If using oats or almonds begin by blending them for 10 seconds into a flour. Mix all the dry ingredients in a separate bowl, make a hole (well) in the centre of the mixture and slowly incorporate the eggs. Then gradually pour in the milk and lemon, being careful not to end up with lumpy batter.

Crepe mixture prefers to be prepared the night before. It will be easier to work with if you let it sit for at least 30 minutes.

Lightly grease a frying pan with coconut oil, ladle a large spoonful of mixture onto the hot pan, when bubbles burst on the surface and the edges go dry the crepes are ready, flip and wait another minute or two before removing, .

Serve with blueberries, and other fresh or stewed fruits, nuts or seeds, coconut yoghurt, maple syrup, honey. Or try a savoury pancake with avocado, sauerkraut, spinach and sardines. I also love these with an egg on top, mushrooms and avocado.

The crepe by itself contains protein, fibre and healthy fats. So even if I serve it to my kids with butter and a little honey - it is a whole food protein included breakfast.

These pancakes also make good wraps for school.

Blueberry Muffins

These muffins are a good breakfast and also a good snack for the lunchbox or for morning or afternoon tea

Ingredients

1/4 cup white chia seeds
1 cup mashed banana
1/2 cup gluten-free oat flour OR 1/2 cup almond meal
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon sea salt
1/4 cup maple syrup
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1/2 cup frozen blueberries
2 eggs

Optional add in - 1 Tbl hemp protein powder for protein

Method

Preheat the oven to 180C.

Place the white chia seeds in the blender alone and blend them on high until finely ground. Add the mashed banana, eggs, flour, baking powder, sea salt, maple syrup, and lemon juice into the blender and blend until smoothly combined into the batter.

Pour the batter into a bowl and stir in the frozen wild blueberries. Line a mini muffin tin with 16 mini baking cups and fill each with 1 heaped tablespoon of batter. Place the tin into the oven and bake for 20 minutes until the tops of the muffins are turning golden brown and an inserted toothpick comes out clean.

Remove the muffins from the oven and allow them to cool before eating. They will continue to firm up inside as they cool.

Granola

Ingredients

1 cup (60 g) shredded coconut
1/2 cup (70 g) coarsely chopped macadamia nuts or other hard nut like almond
1/3 cup (45 g) pepitas (pumpkin seeds)
1/3 cup (40 g) crushed walnuts
Pinch of sea salt
Pinch of ground nutmeg
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 cup (125 ml) maple syrup
1/4 cup (125 ml) unflavoured coconut oil, melted

Method

Preheat the oven to 180C and line a baking tray with baking paper.
Mix all the dry ingredients together, including the salt and spices. Then drizzle them with maple syrup and melted coconut oil. Now for the fun part. Get your hands in there and mix it until everything has a nice even coating of maple syrup and coconut oil.
Spread the chunky mixture over the baking sheet and bake for 15 minutes, or until it's golden brown.
When it's cool, pop the mixture into a jar and your breakfast is ready for the week. Serve it with chia pudding, coconut yoghurt and fresh fruit such as banana, blueberries, strawberries or mango.

Frozen Fruit Ice Cream

This is basically a homemade ice-cream. The banana is essential for the creaminess and sweetness, but essentially you can use any frozen fruit.

Ingredients

100g Frozen banana

100g Frozen Mango

100g frozen mixed berries

Optional protein - 2 Tbl tahini or peanut butter or 100g hemp seeds

Method

Place all ingredients in a blender and blend on full speed for about 1 minute. Until completely blended and smooth and creamy.

With the ingredients it is about 100-150g of frozenfruit per person and you can use any combination. The banana really adds a nice creamy texture. 70% banana and 30% mango is my favourite combination.

In our house this is one of our summer staples - we even have it some days for breakfast with granola. The addition of tahini or hemp seeds boosts the protein content and I might also add other things like collagen, seaweed calcium or prebiotic powder like inulin.

Smoothie

The smoothie is a very easy way to get maximum nutrients into one easy to drink breakfast. The nutrient content can be boosted by adding superfoods like spirulina, barley grass, chlorella, prebiotic powders or whatever you feel is best for your child's system. Boost your smoothie with hemp seeds, tahini, peanut butter, or a handful of nuts or seeds. Starting your day with fibre gives us longer lasting energy and is great for digestive health. Freshly ground flaxseed or chia are my favourites for smoothies. If the fruit is frozen it adds to the taste, this is also a great way of saving fruit that may otherwise go off, peel it and keep it in a sealed container in the freezer.

Basic Smoothie

Ingredients

1 handful of leafy greens such as silverbeet, kale, spinach, parsley, mint coriander (washed and torn)

2 Tbl chia seeds

2 Tbl hemp seeds

1 tsp - Tbl spirulina

1 tsp barley grass

1 Tbl prebiotic powder 1/4 cup blueberries, 1/4 cup mango

1/2 frozen banana

1/2 cup plant based milk or coconut water - to the consistency you like.

Due to the chia this smoothie will thicken the longer it stands.

You can also add, cucumber, lime or lemon juice, coconut oil, inulin, maple syrup, honey.

Anything that blends and is tasty and nutritious.

Please note - if digestion is weak, smoothies may be too cold and difficult on the system in the morning. They may be better as an after school treat or snack.

Homemade Baked Beans

Ingredients

1 tbsp Olive oil
1 onion finely diced
2 cloves Garlic, minced
1 - 2 tsp Spanish Smoked Paprika 300g Passata
1 tbsp Tomato Paste
60ml Chicken / Vegetable Stock 195g cooked Haricot (Navy) beans

Method

Heat oil in a sauce pan over medium heat.

Add onion and cook gently for 5 minutes, add the garlic and allow to sizzle but be careful not to burn.

Reduce heat to low, add the smoked paprika and stir.

Add the passata and stock turn up the heat until bubbling and then turn to low and simmer for around 20 mins (until the sharp taste of tomato has gone and the sauce has thickened.)

Add the beans and simmer for a further 10 mins.

Season to taste

You can do larger batches of this and freeze portions, taking them out the night before for breakfast.

Potato Rosti

Ingredients

1 large starchy potato, peeled and grated 1/2 tablespoon arrowroot or tapioca flour 1/2
spring onion (optional)
1/4 teaspoon salt

Method

Preheat oven to 220 degrees
Line a baking tray with baking paper
Combine all ingredients
Drop 1/4 cup portions of potato mixture onto paper and shape into circles 1/4 inch thick
Bake rosti for 20 minutes, remove from oven, carefully flip and return to oven for 5 mins
Enjoy with Homemade Baked Beans

Homemade Oat Milk

Ingredients

100g oats
1 litre water
Pinch of salt
1 teaspoon maple syrup

Method

Blend all ingredients at high speed for 1 minute
Drain through cheesecloth or muslin
Store in the fridge up to 2-3 days (freeze half if needed)