

Aim of this Document

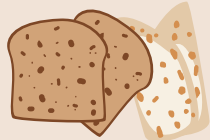

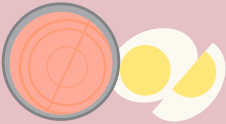

The aim of this document is to help early years providers with serving the right types and amounts of foods for young children. The document summarises the key points from national healthy eating guidance for early years settings (please see reference links at end of this document).

Key Message

Food provided in early years settings should:

- provide appropriate amounts of energy and nutrients to support growth and development
- AND
- ensure every child has an opportunity to develop healthy eating habits for life.

Food Groups Summary **A healthy balanced diet for Early years children is based on these food groups and portions:**

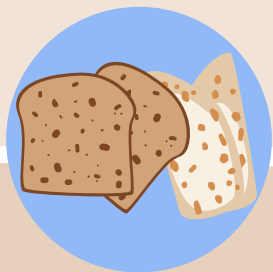
Food Groups	Examples of Food Included	Main Nutrients Provided	Recommended Servings each Day
Starchy carbohydrates 	Bread, potatoes and sweet potatoes, starchy root vegetables including swede and parsnips, bread including wraps and bagels, pasta, noodles, rice, other grains, breakfast cereals	Carbohydrate, fibre, B vitamins and iron	Four portions Provide a portion as part of each meal (breakfast, lunch and tea) and as part of at least one snack each day
Fruit and vegetables 	Fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruit, including apples, grapes*, pears and oranges, vegetables including carrots, broccoli, peppers and sweetcorn, and pulses including peas, lentils, kidney beans and chickpeas	Carotenes (a form of vitamin A), vitamin C, zinc, iron, and fibre	Five portions Provide a portion as part of each meal (breakfast, lunch and tea) and with some snacks
Proteins 	Meat including pork and beef, poultry including chicken and turkey, fish including cod, pollock and salmon, shellfish including prawns, eggs, meat alternatives including Quorn, beans, pulses, nuts**	Protein, iron, zinc, omega 3 fatty acids, vitamins A and D	Two portions Provide a portion as part of lunch and tea (Two to three portions for vegetarian or vegan children)
Dairy and alternatives 	Milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais, custard, puddings made from milk	Protein, calcium, and vitamin A	Three portions Provide as part of meals, snacks and drinks

Starchy Carbohydrates

Why they are important

Carbohydrates are a very varied group and have different effects on our health, so ensuring a variety of carbohydrates is important.

Wholegrain/ **wholewheat carbohydrates are important as they contain more fibre** which is needed for healthy digestion. For adults, benefits of fibre include that it bulks out the diet, filling us up quicker and reducing energy density. But young children need lots of energy and a variety of nutrients to grow, so fibre needs to be introduced gradually, to ensure it doesn't fill them up too quickly.



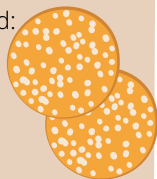
Examples

Most of children's intake should be from **starchy carbohydrates**:

- ✓ **Lower sugar or sugar-free breakfast cereals** including Ready Brek, puffed oats, Weetabix, rice crispies, plain cornflakes and porridge can be included.
- ✓ **Other good sources include**; potatoes, bread, rice, pasta, noodles
- ✓ Some **vegetables, pulses and fruit** are also sources, including; swede, parsnips, butternut squash, peas, lentils, beans and bananas
- ✓ To widen the variety offered, try bulgur wheat, couscous or quinoa as an alternative to rice, try different types of bread like rye and swap potatoes for sweet potatoes.
- ✓ Fibre-rich foods include: wholewheat pasta, brown and wild rice, rice and oat cakes, seeded crackers, beans and pulses. Where children can safely eat them, **keep the skins on potatoes**; this adds extra fibre.

Top Tips

- ✓ Children may choose white varieties over wholemeal but introducing wholegrain versions encourages good habits that usually continue into later childhood and adulthood:
 - From around **6 months introduce 1 portion of wholegrain carbohydrate per day**.
 - From around 12 months this can increase.
 - From **2 years of age** aim for a **minimum of 3 portions** of wholegrains **per week**.
- ✓ **50/50 products are available** for a smoother transition for those already accustomed to white breads and pasta.
- ✓ Try to **ensure at least three different varieties of starchy foods** are provided across the week at breakfast, lunch, snack and tea.

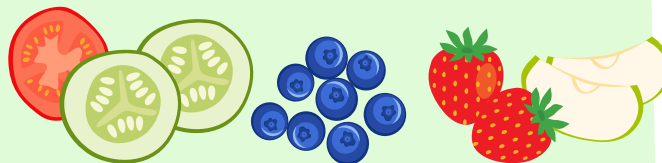


Fruit and Vegetables

Why they are important

Fruits and vegetables contain a variety of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and fibre, which have a beneficial effect to health.

Early exposure to a wide variety of different fruits and vegetables will help children to adopt healthy eating patterns as they grow and become more independent.



Examples

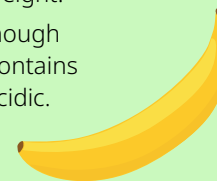
Children over the age of **12 months should aim for 5 portions** of fruits or vegetables daily. A portion is **40g** or roughly a child's handful, approximately:

- ¼ - ½ apple, orange, banana, peach, nectarine
- 1-3 tablespoons carrots, peas or sweetcorn,
- 1-4 cherry tomatoes (cut length-ways)
- 2-10 grapes, berries or cherries (all cut lengthways or in quarters).



Fresh, frozen, tinned fruit (in juice not syrup), tinned vegetables (in water **no salt**) and dried fruit all count. Portions of **dried fruit should be limited to around 15g** for children, as the natural sugar in them is concentrated and can stick to teeth. This is the equivalent of 40g of the fresh fruit weight.

Avoid fruit juice (even diluted fruit juice), as although it provides nutrients such as vitamin C, it also contains large amounts of fruit sugar (fructose) and is acidic. Fruit sugar and acid can cause tooth decay.



Top Tips

- ✓ If a child is reluctant to try different fruits and vegetables, start with the ones they do like and **gradually add small portions of new varieties** to their plate.
- ✓ Good role modelling and repeated exposure are key to encouraging children to try new things, so **eat with them and keep trying**.
- ✓ Try offering small amounts of fruit or vegetables for children to explore using all their senses.



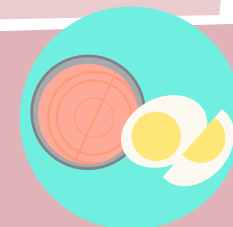
Protein

Why it is important

Protein is particularly **important for growth** in childhood – helping to build **strong bones, teeth and muscles**.

Examples

Main sources are beans (and derivatives e.g. tofu), pulses (e.g. lentils), fish, eggs and meat:



- ✓ **Meat** includes pork, lamb and beef, plus **poultry** which includes chicken and turkey
- ✓ **Fish** includes cod, pollack, haddock, sardines, tuna and salmon, plus shellfish which includes prawns
- ✓ **Good vegetarian and/ or vegan sources** of protein are **eggs** (if eaten), kidney beans, butter/ baked beans, chickpeas, peas, lentils, quinoa, tofu, soya and micro-fungus veggie mince (e.g. Quorn). Nut butters such as cashew butter and ground nuts such as peanuts, are also part of this group and can be included provided allergies are not an issue.

Top Tips

- ✓ for **vegetarian or vegan children aim for 3 portions daily**, as not all plant sources contain a complete range of all the essential amino acids – the building blocks of protein.
- ✓ **At least once a week**, the protein source at lunch should be **plant based for ALL** children, i.e. beans, pulses or foods made from these like soya mince.
- ✓ **At least three different varieties** of protein should be provided **at lunch across the week**.
- ✓ Try to limit processed foods e.g. sausages, meatballs, fishfingers, fishcakes, sausage rolls

Dairy and Alternatives

Why it is important

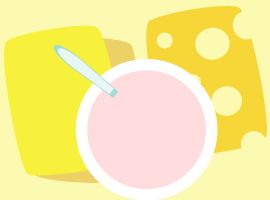
Foods from this group are a good source of **energy, protein, calcium and vitamin A**.

Examples

Good examples include milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais, custard, puddings made from milk and milk-based sauce.

Top Tips

- ✓ **Unsweetened, calcium fortified, plant-based drinks** (e.g. soya, oat) can be used as a non-dairy alternative to cows' milk for children **aged over one** and can be given as a main drink from age two.
- ✓ Choose yoghurt and fromage frais **varieties that are low in sugar or have no added sugar**.



Fat

Why it is important

Fats play a range of roles in the body and so eating some kinds of fat, in the right amounts, is vital. It's important to choose the right balance of fats even for young children because too much fat can be unhealthy.

A low-fat diet isn't suitable for children under five. Young children, especially those under the age of two, need the energy and fat-soluble vitamins (such as vitamin A) provided by fat. **From 2 years old, children can start to have lower-fat dairy products and cut down on fat in other foods** – provided they are growing and eating well. After the **age of five, they can eat a healthy low-fat diet** like the one recommended for adults.

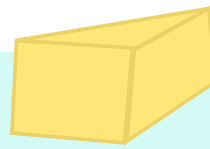
So although fat is an important macronutrient, especially for younger children, **it's still good to eat less of the saturated types of fat**. Saturated fats, solid at room temperature are animal fats such as butter, fat from meat and cheese but also coconut fat. Polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats come from plant sources and are liquid at room temperature.

Examples

- ✓ **Good sources of unsaturated fats** are olive oil, rapeseed oil and sunflower oil, which can be used for stir-frying or made into dips e.g. hummus, pesto (pine nuts are not a tree nut) which can be added to pasta sauces and oily fish such as salmon and sardines, which can be made into fishcakes, baked plain or breaded, or served as a snack lunch or tea e.g. tinned sardines mashed on toast.
- ✓ Other good examples of healthy sources are, avocado and nut butters such as peanut or cashew.
- ✓ **Pastry** should be served **no more than once a week** at any meal, as it is high in saturated fat.
- ✓ **Butter** is high in saturated fat and should only be used in **small amounts** (e.g. spread thinly on bread and used sparingly in cooking).

Top Tips

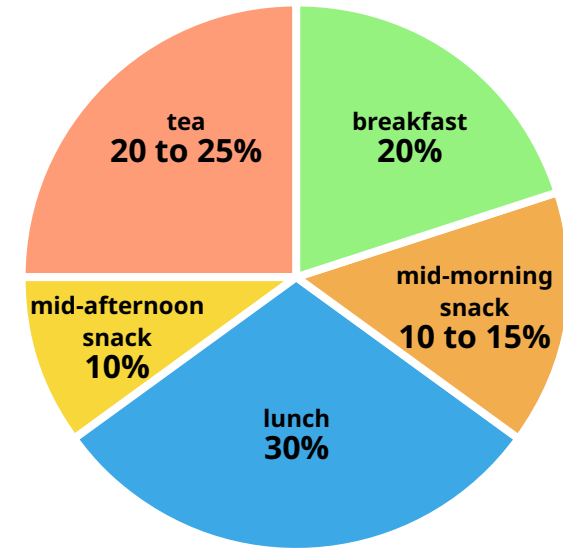
- ✓ **Whole** milk, full fat yogurts/yogurt drinks/ fromage frais and full fat cheeses should be given to **1 to 2 year olds**.
- ✓ **Semi-skimmed milk can be introduced from age two**, provided a child is eating well and thriving. Skimmed or 1% fat milk doesn't contain enough fat so isn't recommended for children under five.
- ✓ **Check food labels for the type of fat included and choose those lower in saturated fat e.g. in spreads**



Food Intake

Young children are growing quickly and have high energy and nutrient requirements, but as they also have smaller stomachs, it's important for them to eat regular, nutrient-dense meals and snacks. Ensure **variety**, as eating a wide range of different foods provides an optimum balance of nutrients.

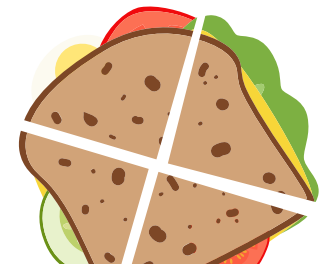
Based on the assumption that lunch is the main meal of the day, here is a useful **guide for food intake** when planning meals across the day:



Average energy requirements per day are around:

- **From age 1 – 965 calories**
- **From age 2 – 1160 calories**
- **From age 3 – 1430 calories**
- **From age 4 – 1530 calories**

This is a guide only; children may need more or less depending on factors such as their sex and activity level. The calories in our diets come from carbohydrate, protein and fat. For young children, **around 50% of calorie intake should come from carbohydrates**.



Drinks

Why they are important

Children need **six to eight drinks** (each of 100–150 ml) each day to make sure they get enough fluid to stay hydrated. This is essential for their health and ability to concentrate.



Examples

Provide **only fresh tap water and plain milk** for children to drink as they do not damage teeth or increase children's risk of dental decay.

Children **must have access to drinking water** throughout the day and be encouraged to help themselves to water.

Top Tips

- ✓ Children may need **more drinks in hot weather or after extra physical activity** as they can dehydrate quite quickly.
- ✓ **Offer children their drinks in open cups.** If using a lidded cup, it should be a free-flow cup without a valve, to encourage children to sip rather than suck, as this is better for their teeth.

Further information about drinks and which milks to give can be found via link 4 at the end of this document.

Food Safety

- * All fruit and vegetables should be washed thoroughly. To reduce the risk of choking:
 - ✓ remove any stones and pips before serving
 - ✓ halve small fruit and vegetables like grapes and cherry tomatoes (halving grapes lengthways)
 - ✓ cut large fruits, like melon, into slices instead of small chunks.

** Be allergy aware; information on food allergies and writing a plan is available at www.allergyuk.org

Early Years Statutory framework

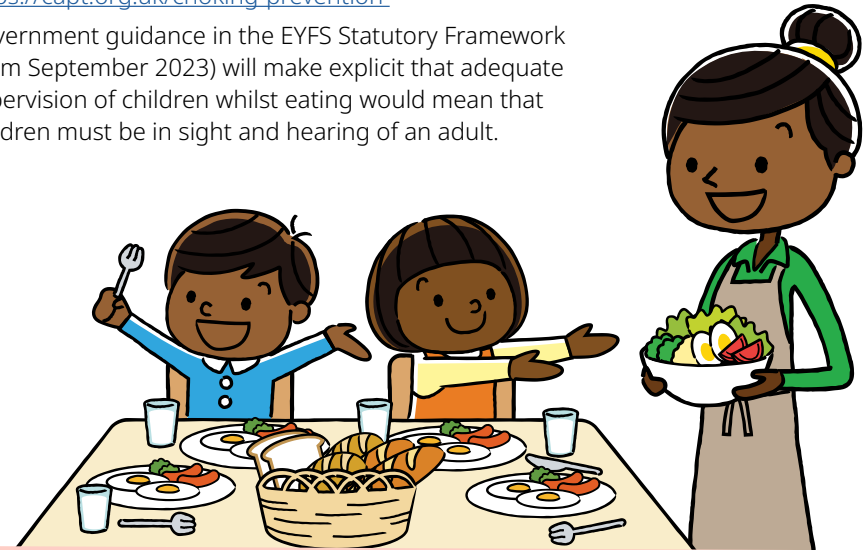
It is a statutory duty to “*promote good health*” (paragraph 3.2) “*Where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, they must be healthy, balanced and nutritious*” (paragraph 3.48)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2

Be aware and minimising choking risks:

<https://capt.org.uk/choking-prevention>

Government guidance in the EYFS Statutory Framework (from September 2023) will make explicit that adequate supervision of children whilst eating would mean that children must be in sight and hearing of an adult.



Promoting Healthy Eating and Drinking

An early years provider's approach to food and drinks offers an important opportunity to encourage children and their families to eat well and to **provide information about healthy choices**. It is **important that parents, carers and children are included in discussions** around the food you provide. Here are some examples of how you can do this:

Top Tips

- ✓ **develop a food policy**, in consultation with staff, parents, carers and children
- ✓ **share your food policy** with parents and carers when their children start to attend your setting and consult them when updating it
- ✓ **give parents and carers regular feedback** on how well, and what, their children are eating and drinking
- ✓ **display menus** for meals and snacks for parents and carers to see and **ask them for feedback** on menus as they are developed and introduced
- ✓ **involve the cook/chef** wherever possible when talking to parents and carers about food
- ✓ **display information and posters about healthy eating for parents** and carers to see and take away
- ✓ **display information for the children** about their food and healthy eating, **such as photos of what is on the menu for that day and fruit and vegetables** for them to touch and talk about



Useful Resources

For more detailed information and practical advice, please see the following links:

1. [Eat Better, Start Better - Foundation Years](#) (produced in 2012 and updated in 2017).

Further information on all the above topics, developed by Action for Children in collaboration with the Children's Food Trust, following recommendations of the Advisory Panel for Food and Nutrition in Early Years. Includes safety guidelines for food groups, including how to prepare food and what to avoid, plus how to develop a food policy.

Please note, advice on eggs has changed and provided British Lion eggs are used and are handled correctly they can be eaten lightly cooked, as well as raw, in foods such as mayonnaise and mousses.

2. Example **3 week spring/ summer and autumn/ winter menus** incorporating all meals.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/example-menus-for-early-years-settings-in-england

3. Portion sizes for Early Years children from the British Nutrition Foundation.
[5532 portion sizes - British Nutrition Foundation](#)

4. Further information from the NHS about drinks to give young children, including types of milks, plus advice about cups.

www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/weaning-and-feeding/drinks-and-cups-for-babies-and-young-children/

5. Practical information and advice for 1-4 year olds from the independent charity First Steps Nutrition, including guides on; snacks, packed lunches, recipes, good choices and portion sizes, feeding vegans, sustainability
www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-early-years

6. Practical information and advice for babies, pregnant and new mums from the independent charity First Steps Nutrition, including guides on; snacks, packed lunches, recipes, good choices and portion sizes, feeding vegans, sustainability
www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-infants-new-mums

For information to display or give to families, please see the following links from First Steps Nutrition:

1. Poster 'Eating Well for 1 – 4 Year Olds, the Three Golden Rules'

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59f75004f09ca48694070f3b/t/5dd838b3ae846337fb57bf5d/1574451380741/Eating_well_1-4_final_poster.png

2. Poster 'Eating Well for Babies 6 months +, the Three Golden Rules'

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59f75004f09ca48694070f3b/t/5dd83c49fde115351212c052/1574452298513/Eating_well_babies_final_poster.png

3. Recipe Booklet for all the family 'Eating Well Recipe Book'

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59f75004f09ca48694070f3b/t/61c05c25dfb43470c1bd15a0/1640001607337/Eating+Well+recipe+book+Jan+2020+.pdf>

4. Guidance Booklet for Parents and Carers 'Eating well: the first year – a guide to introducing solids and eating well up to baby's first birthday'

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59f75004f09ca48694070f3b/t/5efa3797c8ae1024ed8d6596/1593456555402/Eating_well_the_first_year_June_20_for_web.pdf

5. Guidance Booklet for Mums 'Breast Milk and Breastfeeding'

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59f75004f09ca48694070f3b/t/5dc110e08d6a4f2af61f4041/1572933862938/Breastmilk_and_breastfeeding_Nov19.pdf

6. Guidance Booklet for Mums 'Eating Well for New Mums'

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59f75004f09ca48694070f3b/t/5fa27fa1073fea76aa16865e/1604485056122/Eating+Well+for+New+Mums+30+October+2020+live.pdf>

Training

Links to come

