

A guide for parents and young people

All parents and carers want their children to be happy, resourceful and intelligent so that they are fully equipped with a range of life skills.

There is growing scientific evidence to support the fact that a healthy balanced diet adopted at a young age contributes to children's behaviour leading to better performance in school as well as setting good eating standards for life! This is particularly important because as your child grows older, they tend to follow the eating habits, which are established at home.

This guide is aimed to provide you, the parent or carer with general information on nutritional needs for your child and family.

What is a balanced diet?

A balanced diet is one that contains a variety of different foods, from the five different food groups (some of which should be given in moderation)

- Fruit and vegetables
- Bread, other cereals and potatoes
- Milk and dairy foods
- Meat, fish and alternatives
- Foods containing fat, foods containing sugar

“The Balance of Good Health”

The Balance of Good Health plate model shown below highlights the five different food groups and the amount of each food we should be eating. No single food contains all the nutrients we need to stay healthy, that is why it is important to have a balanced and varied diet.

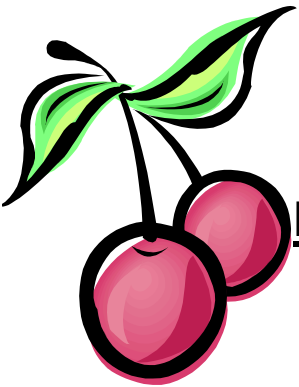


Variety means

- Meals should not centre round chips, burgers, pizzas, crisps and cakes, it is fine to include these foods in the diet but they should be eaten in moderation (for example chips can be part of a balanced diet if eaten once a week).
 - A healthy balanced diet includes bread, pasta, rice, fish, some dairy foods and fruit and vegetables.
 - It is important to remember that the greater the variety of foods within the diet, the less likelihood there is of nutrient deficiencies or excess which can both lead to poor health.
 - A healthy balanced diet adopted now, along with some regular exercise will help avoid many health risks.
- Where there are concerns that your child is either over or under weight it is recommended that you consult your doctor.

How much should I be eating from each of the food groups?

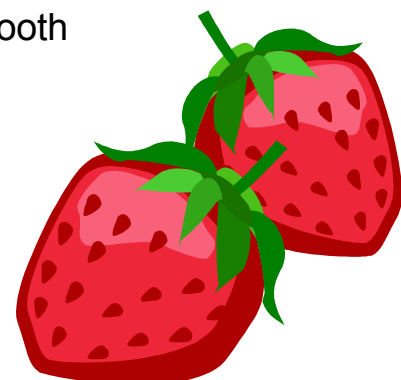
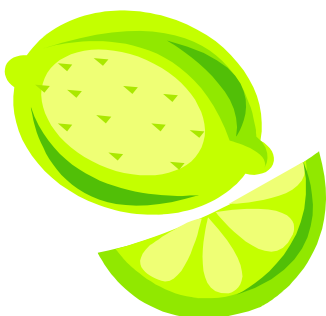
- Food is mainly eaten in the form of meals, often with more than one type. Foods including casseroles, lasagne, chilli con carne, pasta dishes, curry and pizza are all made with foods from a combination of the five groups. To make a healthy choice the main food ingredient needs to be identified and thought about how it fits in with the proportions shown in the balance of good health.



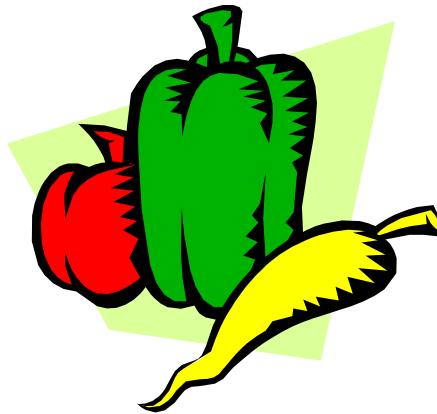
Fruit and vegetables

- Fruit and vegetables should make up a third of the diet. Government's recommendation is that we should eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables per day, fresh, frozen, dried and canned (in natural juice) varieties all count.
 - 2-3 tablespoons of cooked or raw vegetables = a portion
 - Medium sized banana, apple, orange, nectarine = a portion
 - Two small fruits such as apricots, plums, kiwis = a portion
 - One handful of berries/grapes/cherries = a portion
 - 100% fruit/vegetable juice or smoothie = a portion
- They provide the body with plenty of vitamins and minerals.
- Vitamins and minerals have many important functions within the body
- They provide energy, are an excellent source of fibre and other substances including antioxidants (which prevents oxygen from doing damage in the body).
- Certain vitamins are essential for bone and tooth formation such as:

magnesium, calcium and phosphorus



- However a balanced diet will consist of foods containing a variety of vitamins and minerals, which will help keep the whole body, including skin, nails and hair in good condition.
- Vitamin C is found in many fruits and vegetables including kiwi, oranges, and tomatoes, it is essential for production of collagen (for tissue and bones) helps in wound healing and it also helps the absorption of iron from non-meat sources.



Did you know?

- Only one glass of a 100% juice or smoothie will contribute to your daily 5 –a day intake no matter how much you drink. This is because juiced fruit and vegetables contain less fibre. They are also high in sugar as all the sugars are released from the cells in the juicing process.
- Current recommendations are for children to drink fruit juice at mealtimes so that there is less damage to their teeth.
- We should eat different coloured fruit and vegetables each day, to ensure we are getting all the nutrients from fruit and vegetables for our bodies!





Bread, other cereals and potatoes

- Starchy foods (one form of carbohydrate) should make up about a third of what we eat each day (see the plate model). Bread; pasta, couscous, potatoes, rice and cereals are all starchy foods.
- They also contain fibre and a range of nutrients including iron, necessary to keep blood healthy and B vitamins which breakdown food to produce energy along with other functions in the body.

Fibre

- Is important as it helps the function of the digestive system
- It prevents bowel disorders including **constipation (common in children, a high fibre diet with plenty of water can help)**.



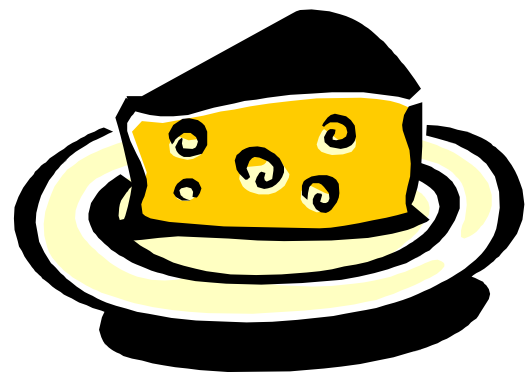
Did you know?

- By eating wholemeal varieties of bread, pasta and rice you are already contributing to your fibre intake.
- These foods are digested slowly so they help to control blood sugar levels and can help make you feel full for longer!
- You should aim to include one starchy food with each main meal.

Milk and Dairy Products

- Foods in this category include cheese, milk including calcium fortified soya milk, yogurt and Halloumi.
- Reasonable amounts of these types of foods should be eaten within the diet.

- These foods are essential in the diet as they provide us with many vitamins and minerals including
 - Calcium,
 - Vitamin B12 (needed to make blood cells)
 - Vitamin A (needed for night vision, growth and repair)
 - Vitamin D (helps with absorption and keeps teeth and bones healthy).
- Foods in this category also contain protein, which like Vitamin A is required for growth and repair.
- Any amounts of protein which are not used for this is used up as energy.



Did you know?

- Low fat versions of milk (semi skimmed or skimmed) or reduced fat cheeses provide you with the right amount of nutrients so where possible try to choose low fat varieties.

- If your child or a family member is a vegetarian ensure that they are eating reasonable amounts of

foods from this group, as these would be the main source of protein and vitamin B12.

Meat, fish and alternatives

- Meat, fish and products such as soya should make up 12% of the diet. Foods in this group include red meats (rich in iron), chicken and fish. Reasonable amounts of these should be eaten within the diet.
- They are the bodies' main source of protein and vitamin B12.
 - Other nutrients provide by this group include iron (needed to keep the blood healthy)
 - Zinc needed for immune function.



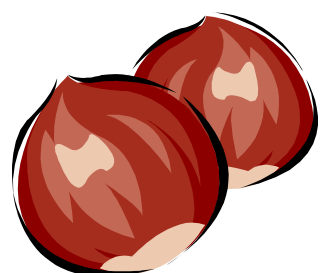
Did you know?

- The way these products are cooked will make a big difference to your calorie intake.
- If your child or a family member is a vegetarian or vegan then soya, beans, and lentils are good substitutes.

- Fried foods like burgers and chips grilled or oven baked taste just as good as fried versions.
- By aiming to use lean cuts of meat or removing visible fat from the meat you will significantly reduce your fat intake without missing it within the diet!
- Meats and fish which have battered and breadcrumb coatings contain a higher fat content, where possible try to choose varieties that do not contain these coatings.

Foods containing fat, foods containing sugar

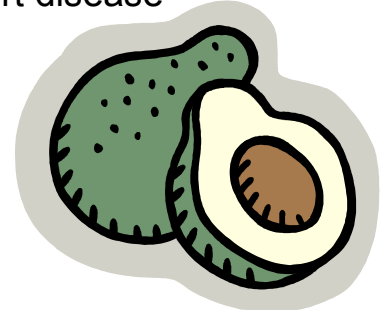
- Fat is important in the diet because it provides the body with essential fatty acids but it is the type of fat included within the diet which is important to health.
- Saturated fat (animal fat) is found in all pastries and cakes (also high in sugar), manufactured meat products such as meat pies and sausages, salad dressings, cream and butter and it is these foods which should be eaten occasionally.
- High intakes of foods containing saturated fats over a period of time are associated with obesity, which can lead to a whole host of health problems including high blood cholesterol levels and CHD (coronary heart disease) in later life.
- Unsaturated fats (polyunsaturated and monounsaturated) are the type of fats that should replace saturated fat in the diet.
- Foods containing unsaturated fat include nuts and seeds, avocados, sunflower, olive and other vegetable oils and oily fish.



- Although these fats contain lots of calories they are nutritionally a better option compared with saturated fat because
- They provide the essential fatty acids, which the body is unable to make by itself.
- They also have the effect of lowering cholesterol levels in the blood, which can lead to coronary heart disease (CHD).

- Trans fats (another type of fat)

- Also have the effect of raising cholesterol levels.



Did you know?

- Trans fats are only stated on food labels when a food is claiming to be either low or reduced in trans fats so always check the label!
- Hydrogenated oils can contain trans fatty acids (hydrogenation is the process when liquid vegetable oils are turned into solids).
- If a food contains hydrogenated oil then it must be labelled, cakes and biscuits are often good examples of foods containing hydrogenated oil.

Oily Fish

- Are types of fish, rich in unsaturated fat. Good sources include fresh, frozen and canned varieties of salmon, sardines and mackerel. Tuna also counts but it must be either fresh or frozen.



- Examples of non-oily fish include cod, haddock, plaice and hake.
- Oily fish provide the body with the essential omega 3 fatty acids.
- Omega 3 fatty acids help keep hearts and the brain healthy.

Did you know?

- Canned tuna does not count as the omega 3 is removed during the canning process.
- Children can have oily fish up to once a week.
- Shark and swordfish have high levels of mercury, this effect children's developing nervous system and therefore should be avoided.

Salt

- Is often found in most foods, it is either naturally present or added during processing.

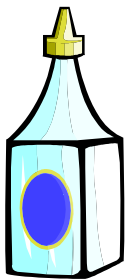
How much salt should we be having?

- **Children between 4-6 yrs no more than 3g of salt per day**
- **Children between 7-10 years no more than of 5g per day.**
- **11 years to adult no more than 6g per day.**
- Foods naturally containing higher levels of salt include bacon and cheese.
- The key is to watch out for processed foods such as ready meals and jars/packets of sauces as well as items like sausage rolls, chicken nuggets, crisps, biscuits as these types of foods are often loaded with salt, even if they carry labels indicating that they are a healthy choice.
- Salt is often labelled as sodium on food labels
- Sodium is the part, which is bad for the body and can cause major health problems such as high blood pressure, which is linked to coronary heart disease.

- It is very important that children do not have too much salt in the diet as this will lead on to poor health in later life.
- To work out the salt content in the food you look at the amount of sodium on the label and x by 2.5, this will give you amount of salt in the food, which is often higher than you think!

Did you know?

- Processed foods aimed at children often contain a higher salt content than you would expect.
- If you want to know what you and your family are actually eating, whenever you can, check the label before you buy.
- Lo salt (contains potassium instead of the sodium) so therefore is a better option. Sea salt, rock and garlic salt are all the same as table salt and not better alternatives.
- Tip instead of adding salt to foods try vinegar, herbs or spices, as these all add flavour.



Water. Everybody knows we should be drinking more of it but why and how much?

- Fluid is lost daily mainly in sweat and urine, to ensure that the loss is replaced in the body it is recommended that approximately 6 to 8 cups (1.5 to 2.0 litres) of water or other fluids should be consumed during the day to keep the body hydrated.
 - Dehydration effects concentration (**particularly important for children whilst they are learning**) and can lead to headaches and tiredness.
- Water is essential for all cells in the body

- It also carries nutrients in the blood.
- Keeping the body hydrated is essential for all bodily functions.



Did you know?

- The best options to give children are water, however milk, milkshakes without added sugar, and 100% fruit juice are all healthy alternatives.
- Juice drinks and fizzy drinks contribute to hydrating the body but as they contain little nutritional content they should only be given occasionally or as treats.
- Some fizzy drinks also contain caffeine and these types of drinks should be avoided at meal times as caffeine reduces the amount of iron, which can be absorbed from foods.



Children who are active

- When children start school they suddenly start growing quickly and become active.
 - Children need a lot more energy and nutrients for their body size than adults.
 - Active children should eat food of high nutritional value in the form of well-balanced meals, rather than snacks that are high in fat, sugar and salt.
 - A healthy balanced diet will provide your child with all the nutrients they need to take part in their favourite sport or activity.
 - As carbohydrate is the most important fuel for energy children taking part in regular sports or activity clubs

should be eating enough carbohydrate to keep them going through the activity.

- The more exercise the child does the more carbohydrates are needed in the diet.
- The amounts that they need all depend on what type of exercise or activity they do, how intense it is, and the length of time they spend exercising.
- Below are examples of popular activities, which children are regularly involved with along with the amount of calories that they could expect to burn off.



- ❑ **Football for 45 minutes burns about 315 kcal**
- ❑ **Dancing for 30 minutes burns about 194 kcal**
- ❑ **Running for 20 minutes burns about 194 kcal**
- ❑ **Walking for 20 minutes burns about 70 kcal**

- In order to keep hydrated and get the most out of the physical activity children need to drink fluid before, after and during exercise.

Acknowledgement:

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Further information:

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Food Standards Agency www.food.gov.uk

British Nutrition Foundation www.nutriton.org.uk

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