



GETTING READY TO LEARN



“Healthy Food
Builds Healthy
Brains”



Key Messages:

- ⇒ **Mealtimes:** Try to have 3 regular meal and 2 snack times each day
- ⇒ **Snack times:** Offer your child a small, healthy snack like fruit, vegetable sticks or toast fingers with cream cheese/peanut butter, 2-3 times a day. This will allow an opportunity other than meal times to provide important nutrients.
- ⇒ **Sugary foods:** should only be given occasionally and given at the end of the meal instead of between meals, as this will help prevent tooth decay.
- ⇒ Aim for **5 kid sized portions of fruit and vegetables** every day. Build it up by starting with 1 more portion each day. NHS suggests that a portion size is the amount that fits in the palm of your child’s hand.
- ⇒ **Drink Plenty**—give your child 6-8 drinks a day. Water or milk is best, avoid fizzy or sugary drinks.
- ⇒ **Milk** is a good choice for drinks as it provides calcium and other important nutrients. Children aged 1-2 years should have **whole milk**, which is a good source of vitamin A. Those eating well can be given **semi-skimmed milk** after 2 years. Skimmed milk is not suitable as a main drink for children under 5.
- ⇒ **Salt:** Limit the amount of salty foods your child eats and be aware of foods containing added salt. A pre-school child should have no more than 2g of salt per day—a packet of crisps contains around 0.3g, a slice of ham 0.3g and 2 tbspn of

Tips To Try

- ⇒ **Create routines around mealtime:** whatever the routine may be (taking turns to serve, telling your news), having routines around meal time makes things predictable and comfortable for your child and can be lots of fun;
- ⇒ **Make meal times fun** by allowing children to touch and smell foods and involve them in food preparation where possible);
- ⇒ **Involve your pre-schoolers in food preparation** and make meals as colourful, interesting and enjoyable as possible;
- ⇒ **Appetite:** most young children can regulate their own appetite so encourage them to eat but don’t force them to eat if they are not hungry.
- ⇒ **Offer small portions** as some children find big portions off putting. You can always offer them a second helping if they are still hungry.
- ⇒ **Variety:** Children’s food preferences can vary so keep offering your child new foods, alongside familiar favourites. It may take up to 10 attempts before a child will accept a new food.
- ⇒ **Praise:** Offer foods in a relaxed way. Praise your child if they try and new food, even if it is only a tiny piece. Praise will help children to develop positive association with food which will mean that they will be more likely to eat them again in the future.
- ⇒ Some young children are **slow eaters** to allow plenty of time for them to eat.
- ⇒ **Modelling:** allow your child to learn from watching you. How you behave has been shown to be effective in encouraging children to accept new foods, so lead by example

WHAT DOES EATING WELL LOOK LIKE FOR PRE-SCHOOLERS?

Pre-schoolers have different dietary requirements to adults.

They need a diet made up of foods from the 4 main food groups, in the right balance and in portion sizes just right for them.

Pre-schoolers need:-

Starchy Foods x 5-a-day

Fruit & Vegetables x 5-a-day

Dairy Foods x 3-a-day

Protein Foods x 2-a-day*

= 5532-a-day



Meals for pre-schoolers should be based on starchy foods which provide energy, vitamins, minerals and, in some cases, fibre. A portion of starchy foods such as bread, potatoes, breakfast cereal, pasta, rice, and spaghetti hoops etc. Starchy foods like oatcakes, breadsticks, scones, pancakes and fingers of toast can also make healthy

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Milk and dairy foods provide protein and essential nutrients like calcium for healthy bones and teeth, and B vitamins for energy. Serve 3 portions a day. Children eating well can be given semi skimmed milk after 2 years. Skimmed or 1% milk is not suitable as a drink for children under 5.

Dairy Foods



Other examples of dairy products include cheese, milk, yoghurt, fromage frais and dairy based desserts like custard or rice pudding. Avoid yoghurts that have a high sugar content,

Serve at least one portion of fruit and vegetables at each meal and at some snack times. Fresh, frozen, canned and dried varieties all count. Examples include 2 tablespoons of vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, peas, spinach, beans, sweetcorn, and carrot sticks. Examples of fruit portions include 1/2 an apple, orange, banana, plum; a handful of strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and cherry tomatoes. Portions can also include dried fruit - eg dates, sultanas and cranberries. If using canned fruit, 4 tablespoons is an appropriate portion size. Children can eat larger portions if they wish. However, dried fruit such as raisins, sultanas, dried apricots and dates should be limited to meal times and to no more than once a day because of their high sugar content. Encourage your child to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables every day. Offer a rainbow of options—purple, blue, orange, yellow, green, brown and white.

Fruit & Vegetables



Serve 2-3 portions a day (3 for a vegetarian pre-schooler). Fish should be served at least twice a week and one of these should be oily fish e.g. salmon, sardines, mackerel, trout.

Portions examples include 2 cocktail sausages, a slice of chicken or turkey, 2 tablespoons of prawns, 2 fish fingers, 1/2 a burger, a slice of beef or pork and a small fillet of salmon, cod or haddock. Tinned fish is a useful store cupboard ingredient, 1 1/2 tablespoons of salmon, tuna or tinned sardines. Other forms of protein include eggs, hummus, peanut butter, lentils and beans, including baked beans. Avoid processed meat and fish products which are high in fat and salt such as crumb-coated products, burgers, pies and canned meats. Sausages should only be served once a week.

Protein Foods



Helping Pre-school Children Eat Well

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY— to have a good appetite children need to be active every day. Any type of movement including active play, outdoor play, games, dance and playing with other children all help to ensure that children have a good appetite. Activity also builds up muscle strength and fitness, develops physical skills such as balance and co-ordination and provides a release for children's energy.



FAMILY MEAL TIMES—Children should be encouraged to eat the same healthy food as the rest of the family. They do not need special children's food. Usually the food sold for children is often very expensive for the portion size.



Children should be allowed to serve themselves during meals, as this may encourage them to try different kinds of foods. Child-sized utensils, crockery, tables and chairs may also make it easier for children to serve themselves and learn to eat independently.

Meal and snack times offer an opportunity to extend children's social and language skills. Children can learn from others about table manners, and can practise their speaking and listening skills. To encourage this, distractions such as television are best avoided during meal times.

BREAKFAST is a particularly important meal and fortified breakfast cereals can make an important contribution to your child's vitamin and mineral intakes. Choose cereals which are low in added salt and sugar. Other breakfast ideas include scrambled eggs, baked beans, egg bread and pancakes.



SNACKS—Children need to eat regularly and need nutritious snacks between meals. The best snacks are those which are low in added sugar. A variety of snacks should be offered including fruit, vegetables, milk, yoghurt, any type of bread, and sandwiches with savoury fillings.



DRINKS — Children should be encouraged to drink tap water if they are thirsty. Water quenches thirst, does not spoil the appetite, and does not damage teeth.

Offer your child 6-8 glasses (about 100 ml servings) of drinks a day.

On average, a 3-4 year old is likely to need no more than 300ml (1/2 pint) of milk a day. If children refuse to drink milk they can still get the calcium and vitamins that milk provides from a bowl of full fat yoghurt, a bowl of rice pudding.



Fruit juice can be consumed occasionally and can contribute to vitamin C.

Limit sugar sweetened and fizzy drinks as these can fill up young children and reduce their appetite.

Children should not be given sweet drinks (such as fruit juice, squashes and other soft drinks) in a bottle/sippy cup. Sweet drinks should only be given with meals.

Tea and coffee are not suitable drinks for under 5s as they contain caffeine and can reduce the amount of iron absorbed from food.

FUSSY EATERS— Children should be allowed to make their own food choices. If a child refuses a food or meal, encourage them to eat but never force them.

Children often eat well in a calm atmosphere where others are enjoying their food.



To minimise food refusal, it is important to ensure that a variety of foods are offered without judgement.

Some children don't like different parts of the meal touching each other, some prefer to have food that they can see clearly (for example, not covered in sauce or gravy) and some may prefer certain food items on separate plates and bowls.

Remember that children's taste change. Foods offered regularly often become liked foods and it is important to serve a variety of foods even if they are not eaten, so that children get used to seeing them on their plate.

