Patient Information

University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust

Nutrition and Dietetics

Start right - Eating for the One to Five year olds

Introduction

This leaflet is a guide to healthy eating for children between the ages of one and five. We look at how to make mealtimes enjoyable and discuss topics that some parents or carers may be worried about.

- Cover the floor to catch the mess.
- Strap your child in safely but keep their hands and head free.
- Sit together at mealtimes. Talk and interact with your child.
- Avoid distractions such as TV, tablets, and phones.
- Encourage your child to eat the same foods as the rest of the family.
- Allow them to use their fingers to touch the food and make a mess. This will give them a chance to learn to eat.
- Leave wiping face and hands to the end of the meal.
- Look and listen for signs that your child has had enough.20 minutes is long enough for most children.

What do children need?

- Three regular meals daily.
- A good variety of foods.
- Appropriate snacks.

Every day your child needs:

1. One pint of milk or 3 things from this list:
   - Beaker of milk (120ml)
   - Small chunk of cheese (20g-30g)
   - One yoghurt (100-120g) pot

2. Meat, fish, eggs, and pulses such as beans, dhal, lentils, and peas), and foods made from pulses such as tofu, hummus, and soya mince); at least twice a day (3 portions a day for a vegetarian child).

3. Fruit and vegetables (fresh, tinned, dried or frozen) with every meal. Aim for 5 child's fist size portions a day. A 150ml glass of fresh unsweetened, or 100% fruit juice, or smoothie also counts as one of 5-a-day but should be given along with meals.

4. Aim for 1 starchy food at each mealtime:
   - Rice
   - Potatoes
   - Bread
   - Chapatti
   - Breakfast cereal
   - Pasta

5. At least one food containing iron:
   - Eggs
   - Meat e.g., Lamb, beef, chicken, pork
   - Oily fish e.g., mackerel, tuna
   - Green vegetables e.g., spinach, broccoli
   - Beans e.g., Butter, kidney or baked beans, chickpeas, tofu, lentils
   - Breakfast cereals fortified with iron

6. Vitamin C - this helps to absorb iron. Include food or drinks rich in vitamin C at mealtimes:
   - Green vegetables e.g., kale, Brussel sprouts
   - Diluted orange juice or blackcurrant

- An orange, satsuma, kiwi fruit or a portion of 3-5 strawberries

Main meal ideas

Encourage your child to eat the same foods as the rest of the family.

Some of the meals below may be quicker to prepare than others, but they are all healthy. You may find these menu suggestions helpful:

- Chicken or fish with rice and peas.
- Flaked tuna mixed with pasta, served with carrots or broccoli.
- Grilled sausages, vegetable burger or bacon with mashed potato and peas
- Shepherd's pie, Home-made is best. This can be done with mince topped with mashed potato. Grill for a crispy topping. Serve with peas or carrots.
- Grilled fish fingers or veggie fingers with baked beans and potato.
- Chapatti or rice or naan bread with meat, lentil, bean, chicken or vegetable curry and yoghurt
- Spaghetti bolognaise - use mince. Add tomatoes and carrots and try different pasta shapes. Serve with side salad.
- Fish in cheese sauce with boiled or jacket potato and tinned or frozen peas.
- Cauliflower cheese and boiled potatoes or bread with peas or sweetcorn or tomatoes.

Ways to limit salt.

Too much salt is not good for our health. Usually, home-made foods contain less salt than 'instant' or pre-cooked products. Try the following:

- Mash your own potato rather than buying dried potato.
- Use fresh mince rather than tinned.
- Use a home-made sauce rather than ready-made.
- Don't add salt to food.
- Reduce salty snacks.

Quick meal ideas

It is not necessary to spend a long time preparing meals. Here are some ideas for easy meals:

- Grilled cheese on toast.
- Small bread roll or sandwich filled with cheese spread, cooked meat, or banana.
- Wholemeal crackers with humus, cheese spread or peanut butter.
- Jacket potato with tuna and sweetcorn.
- Toast fingers with baked beans, scrambled egg, or tinned spaghetti.

Serve meals with vegetables or salad e.g., cherry tomatoes, cucumber, or carrot sticks.

Pudding ideas

For children's growing needs, puddings are an important source of energy & should be offered in addition to the main meal.

Here are some ideas for healthy puddings:

- Fresh fruit
- Milk puddings, either tinned or home-made e.g., rice, sago, tapioca
- Tinned fruit in natural juice with yoghurt or ice cream
- Banana and custard
- Yoghurt or fromage frais (add liquidised fruit e.g., banana and mango to make a fruit smoothie
- Cooked fruit e.g., microwave apple with custard
- Fruit set in jelly

Drinks

- Encourage your child to drink from a cup. Drinking from a bottle can increase risk of tooth decay.
- You can start your child on full-fat milk after one year (or semi-skimmed after 2 years if your child is eating a varied diet).
- Water between meals is the best option.

- Diluted, unsweetened fruit juice - restrict this to mealtimes to reduce the risk of tooth decay.
- Remember sweet and fizzy drinks, including diet varieties, cause tooth decay and spoil your child's appetite. **Do not give in a bottle.**
- Do not give tea and coffee as they reduce the absorption of iron from food.
- If your child needs a drink during the night only offer water.
- Don't add sugar to drinks.

Snacks

Some children can manage only small amounts of food at mealtimes and may need snacks in-between. You could give:

- Fresh fruit: apple, banana, orange segments, chopped seedless grapes, peaches.
- Sandwich or mini pitta with savoury filling.
- Toast with cheese spread or other savoury spreads.
- Fruit smoothie (add liquidised fruit e.g., banana and mango to milk or yoghurt to make fruit smoothie)
- Unsweetened Breakfast cereals
- Crumpet, scotch pancake, cheese scone
- Vegetable sticks
- Yoghurts

Avoid giving cakes, sweets, chocolate, sweet biscuits and crisps in-between meals.

Should I give my child vitamin drops?

The department of Health recommends that all children aged 6 months to 5 years should have vitamin supplements containing vitamins A, C & D. Bottle-fed babies drinking at least 500ml of formula milk a day do not need a supplement. If you qualify for Healthy Start, vitamin supplements are free.

It's also recommended that babies who are being breastfed are given a daily vitamin D supplement containing 300 – 400 IU Vitamin D (7.5 – 10 ug) from birth, even if you're taking a supplement containing vitamin D yourself.

https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/vitamins-for-children/

Is your child getting too heavy?

- Try and be careful with the amount of fatty and sugary foods in the diet.
- Keep to regular meals and try to cut out snacks in between.
- Use fresh fruit, tinned fruit in natural juice, yoghurt, or jelly as a dessert.
- Cut down on sugary foods such as sweets and chocolates, sugar, sweet puddings, fizzy drinks, ice-cream, barfi, and jalebi.
- Cut down on fatty snacks such as crisps, biscuits, samosa, pakora, chevda, paratha.
- Limit chips to once a week.
- Encourage your child to be more active.

Is your child constipated?

- Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids, water is the best option; try to drink at least 6 - 8 drinks a day.
- Use some wholegrain starches (bread, rice etc) as well as white.
- Choose wholemeal breakfast cereals such as porridge, Weetabix, Branflakes, Shredded Wheat, Shreddies, or a mixture of these and other cereals. You could add fresh or dried fruit to cereals.
- Have plenty of vegetables and fruit with meals. Leave the skins on but wash thoroughly.

If this persists for longer than 3 days, contact your health visitor or GP.

Useful websites

Start4life: www.nhs.uk/start4life

NHS Choice: www.nhs.uk and 5 A Day portion sizes https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/5-a-day/portion-sizes/

British Dietetic Society: https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/healthy-eating-for-children.html

Netmums: www.netmums.com

British Nutrition Foundation (BNF): https://www.nutrition.org.uk/life-stages/toddlers-and-pre-school/5532-portion-sizes/

If you are having concerns with your child's diet or eating habits, you should contact your health visitor or doctor.

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