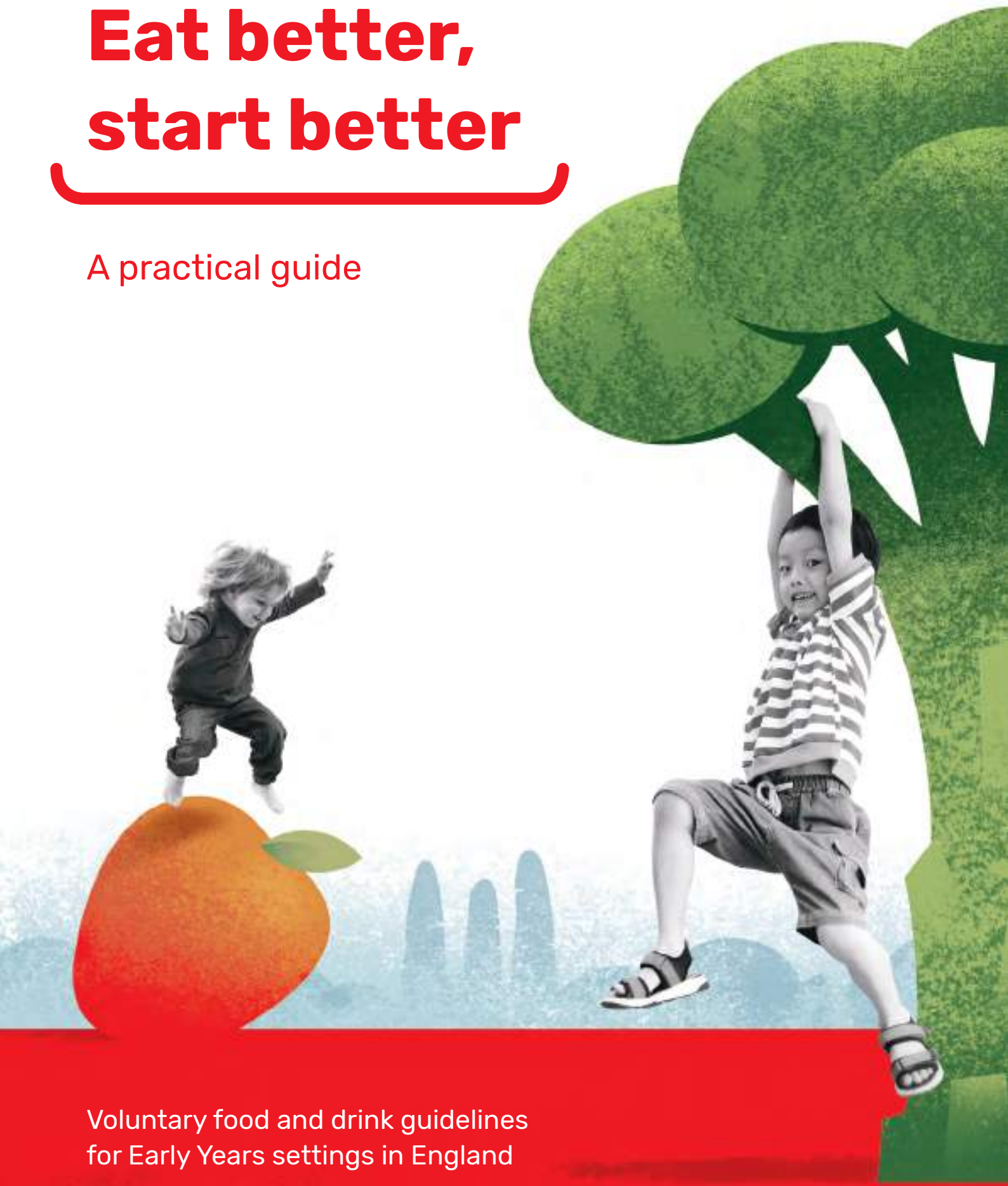
Eat better, start better

A practical guide



Voluntary food and drink guidelines
for Early Years settings in England

actionforchildren.org.uk

Acknowledgements

This practical guide to the Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England was first published in January 2012 and updated 2017.

It was developed following the recommendations of the Advisory Panel for Food and Nutrition in Early Years, and was produced to support early years settings in England to meet the nutritional requirements of children in their care, and encourage them to eat well.

Action for Children would like to thank the Children's Food Trust and the members of the External Reference Group involved in the development of this practical guide. The sharing of their experience, expertise and providing their recipes provides an invaluable resource to all Early Years providers to give children the foundations for a healthy future.

Photos of children by Karla Gowlett, with thanks to Katharine Bruce Community Nursery, part of the London Early Years Foundation. Additional photos of children with thanks to NCMA (now PACEY), NDNA and Pre-school Learning Alliance. Meals and snacks prepared and photographed by Helena Little (Brave Design) and Erica Hocking. Additional photos with kind permission from the Caroline Walker Trust.

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HOW ACTION FOR CHILDREN WORKS

Action for Children supports parents, carers and anyone working with children by giving them the tools and guidance they need to ensure that every child has the very best start in life. We are seeing too many young children start school overweight which leads to long-term problems. This can be avoided with your help, and by using this practical guide developed by the Children's Food Trust which is an essential resource for early years practitioners. Children need to acquire good food habits early on that lay the foundations for a healthy future and this guide shows how.

Tony Hawkhead, Chief Executive, Action for Children

We were delighted that so many of our members contributed some great practical tips and tools to help children eat healthily. We very much welcome these updated guidelines which will help ensure that all children have access to the healthy, balanced diet they need to give them the best start in life.

Liz Bayram,
Chief Executive, Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years

All children attending early years settings should benefit from a healthy, balanced and nutritious diet, and these voluntary guidelines are an excellent resource to help to build practitioners' knowledge, skills and confidence when cooking or preparing food. With both the EYFS and Ofsted's Common Inspection Framework placing a strong focus on children's nutrition, following these guidelines will help settings meet national standards and demonstrate to parents a strong commitment to helping children eat well.

Neil Leitch, Chief Executive,
Pre-school Learning Alliance

We welcome this updated guide and the opportunities it provides for helping children eat healthy and nutritious food. It is vital that we set a good foundation for the health and wellbeing of all our children.

Ruth Pimentel, Director of Nurseries,
Action for Children

The update of the Children's Food Trust Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England: A Practical Guide supports the updated Government advice in HM Government Menus and Guidance for early years settings, providing helpful advice on how to ensure food provision meets the nutritional needs of young children.

Dr Alison Tedstone, Chief Nutritionist,
Public Health England

We are passionate about reducing inequalities in childhood. The national food and drink guidelines will help to ensure that all young children have access to a healthy, balanced, nutritious diet while attending early years settings.

Joyce Connor,
Assistant Director Practice and Programmes (Early Years), National Children's Bureau

The under-fives are a unique age group in that their nutritional needs change quite rapidly, and guidance regarding food groups and portion sizes is a particular area of need. Nurseries are passionate about helping children get the best start in life, and this guidance will help them do this consistently throughout their day-to-day practice.

Claire Schofield,
Director of Membership, Policy and Communications, National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)

High quality early education boosts children's learning and can help to narrow the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers. Providing healthy food sets children up to learn and enjoy, which is why we support these guidelines and their role in improving the quality of food provided by nurseries and childminders.

Ellen Broomé,
Chief Executive,
Family and Childcare Trust.

Eat Better, Start Better was supported with a grant under the Department for Education's 'Improving Outcomes for Children, Young People and Families' fund.

With special mention to the Children's Food Trust for the development of this guide.

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Why healthy eating matters for young children

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Why has this guide been developed?

This guide has been developed to help early years providers and practitioners to meet the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) welfare requirement for the provision of healthy, balanced and nutritious food and drink.[1] Encouraging children to eat well and learn about food in their early years not only protects their health when they are young, but also sets the foundations for their future health and wellbeing.

Early years settings provide an ideal opportunity to help every child eat well, enjoy a varied diet and establish healthy eating habits to take with them into their school years.

Early years settings provide an ideal opportunity to help every child eat well, enjoy a varied diet and establish healthy eating habits to take with them into their school years.

Early years providers, practitioners and parents have called for clear, national guidelines on what children under the age of five should eat and drink while attending early years settings.[2]

This guide sets out the food and drink guidelines for early years settings in England, and was updated in 2017 to reflect current government dietary recommendations for infants and children aged six months to four years. Following the advice in this practical guide when providing food and drink will help you to meet the nutritional requirements of young children in your care.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for early years settings providing meals, snacks or drinks to children from the age of one up to four years.[†] The new example early years menus cover food provision for children aged six months to four years and information on providing food for infants aged six to 12 months has been included on pages 56-59.

This guide can be used by all regulated providers, regardless of the length of time that children spend in the setting, including:

- children's centres
- registered childminders and nannies
- private, voluntary and independent nurseries
- local authority maintained nursery schools
- nursery classes within primary schools[‡]
- pre-schools
- sessional settings, such as playgroups.

Non-regulated settings, such as parent and toddler groups, are also encouraged to use this guide when planning and providing food and drink for children.

Parents and carers may find this guide useful to help them to understand the types and amounts of food and drink that they should expect their child to be offered whilst attending an early years setting. Involving parents and their children in food and drink provision is an important aspect of the Early Years Foundation Stage[3] framework, as it helps to reinforce good eating habits for life.

This guide sets out the food and drink guidelines for early years settings in England. Following the advice in this practical guide when providing food and drink will help you to meet the nutritional requirements of young children in your care.

Why is a healthy, balanced and nutritious diet essential for young children?

A healthy, balanced diet and regular physical activity are essential for children's health and wellbeing. Research confirms that healthy eating habits in the years before school are very important because they influence a range of health and development outcomes in later life.[4, 5, 6]

A 2010 review of health inequalities by Marmot[7] identifies the early years as a crucial time to intervene to reduce health inequalities across the life course. Quality of early years experiences can have a fundamental impact on all aspects of human development, physically, emotionally and intellectually.

Encouraging breastfeeding and ensuring that children eat well in their early years are key to ensuring that they achieve their potential, and help prevent them becoming overweight and obese. This approach also helps to reduce the risk of serious diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, stroke and cancers in later life.

Good nutrition is important for children aged under five to:

- ensure that they get the right amount of energy (calories) and nutrients needed while they are growing rapidly
- ensure that they do not consume too much energy (calories), which may lead to children becoming overweight or obese
- encourage them to eat a wide variety of foods and develop good dietary habits to take with them into later childhood and beyond.

† This guidance has been written to ensure the nutritional requirements of children aged from one up to four years are met. These requirements have been derived from the Dietary Reference Values (DRVs) for children aged one to four years. This includes children up to their fifth birthday.

‡ The food and drink guidelines within this guide apply only to nursery classes within primary schools. Food and drink provided to registered pupils at local authority maintained primary schools is required to meet The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014. Food provided to children attending nursery units of primary schools is required to meet schedule 5 of these regulations; meeting the food and drink guidelines in this document will meet these requirements.

What is the current health status of young children in England?

- Over a fifth of children are either overweight or obese by the time they join reception class in primary school (their final year in the EYFS).[8]
- Type II diabetes, which usually appears in adulthood, is starting to be seen among some overweight children.[9]
- Dental health is poor in many young children.[10]
- Cases of rickets are appearing more frequently.[11]
- More than one in four young children in the UK may be at risk of iron deficiency,[12] which is linked to slower intellectual development and poor behaviour in the longer term.[13]

In recent years, changes in children's diets have affected their nutrient intakes with some children eating foods that are low in energy, iron and vitamin A, and high in saturated fat, sugars[14] and salt.[15] In addition, many young children also eat fewer than the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables each day.[16]

What is a healthy, balanced, nutritious diet for children aged one to four years?

A healthy balanced diet for children aged one to four years is based on the four food groups listed below, which provide a range of essential nutrients that children need to grow and develop.

Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates

Fruit and vegetables

Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins

Dairy and alternatives

One of the basic principles of healthy eating is variety, as eating a wider range of different foods provides a better balance of nutrients. Planning meals and snacks to include a variety of food and drinks from these four food groups each day will provide children with the good balance of nutrients they need.

The wider the variety of food and drinks eaten, the better the balance of nutrients provided.

Foods and drinks high in fat, salt and sugars

Young children need fat in their diet to ensure they get enough energy. However, if they eat too much fat, they may consume more energy (calories) than they need, and may gain excess weight. The *type* of fat that children eat is also important, and the amount of saturated fat, found in foods such as meat and meat products, butter, cakes and biscuits, should be limited.

It is also important that children do not eat too much sugar and salt. Eating sugary food and drinks too often can lead to tooth decay and provide 'empty calories' which fill children up but do not provide other essential nutrients. Too much salt can give children a taste for salty foods, and eating a diet high in salt can cause serious health conditions in later life.

To establish good eating habits, make sure the food and drink you provide for children is not high in saturated fat, sugar and salt. Limiting or avoiding some foods, ingredients and cooking practices will help to ensure that an appropriate amount of fat, sugar and salt is provided for children, and will also help encourage diversity in children's diets. Foods, ingredients and cooking practices to limit or avoid are highlighted in the food and drink guidelines.

Children are unlikely to take in more energy than they need if they are offered a range of healthy meals and snacks that meet the food and drink guidelines. Conversely, foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt are unlikely to provide the balance of energy and nutrients that young children need and including them in the diets of very young children may contribute to them becoming overweight and having a poor nutrient intake.

Further guidance on fat, salt and sugar can be found on pages 27–29.

How does a healthy, balanced diet for children aged one to four years differ from that needed by older children and adults?

Healthy eating advice for children aged five and over and for adults is illustrated by the Eatwell Guide,[17] which shows the proportions in which different types of foods are needed to have a well-balanced and healthy diet.

Young children are growing quickly and have high energy and nutrient requirements for their size. They also eat smaller amounts than older children and adults, so it is important for them to eat regular meals and snacks that contain sufficient energy and nutrients for their needs. A low-fat, high fibre diet based on the proportions set out by the Eatwell Guide is therefore not appropriate for young children, particularly children aged under two years, as it may not provide enough energy, fat, iron or zinc, and is too high in fibre.

Between the ages of two and five years, children should gradually move towards the diet recommended for older children and adults, with less energy provided from fat, and more fibre.

Young children are growing quickly and have high energy and nutrient requirements for their size.

What about food and drink for children from birth up to 12 months old?

In the first 12 months of life, babies' nutritional requirements differ from those of children aged over one year. Information on introducing a variety of foods and encouraging infants to eat well can be found on pages 56-59. Two example one week menus showing how meals for one to four year olds can be adapted for infants aged seven to 12 months can be found on pages 75 and 76. More detailed guidance on how to provide food and drink for this age group is available from HM Government (2017) 'Example menus for early years settings in England: Part 1 - Guidance'.[18]

For more information on providing healthy food and drink to children from birth up to 12 months refer to the Start4life website and resources,[19] the NHS Choices website,[20] or the First Steps Nutrition Trust 'Eating well: the first year'.[21]

Breastfeeding

Encouraging breastfeeding is a priority.

Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for around the first six months of a baby's life and, after that, giving breast milk alongside solid food will help them to continue to grow and develop.[19] Breastfeeding has long-term benefits for babies. Not breastfeeding can increase the risk of gastrointestinal, respiratory and middle ear infections. There is also an association between not breastfeeding and risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and growing evidence that not breastfeeding may increase the risk of overweight/obesity and diabetes later in life. Breastfeeding also has benefits for the mother, with good evidence to suggest that breastfeeding decreases the risk of breast cancer and may also reduce the risk of ovarian cancer and type 2 diabetes.[19, 22, 23]

Mothers who return to work but wish to continue to breastfeed should be encouraged and enabled to do so.[23] Expressed breast milk provided for babies in early years settings should be labelled, stored safely and used only for that child. More detailed guidance on supporting women to breastfeed in early years settings, safe storage of expressed breastmilk and infant formula is available in HM Government (2017) 'Example menus for early years settings in England: Part 1 - Guidance'.[18]

Advice on expressing and storing breast milk can be obtained from a health visitor or online from NHS choices[24] or the Association for Breastfeeding Mothers.[25]

Vitamin supplements and the Healthy Start scheme

Government recommends:

- Breastfed babies from birth to one year of age should be given a daily supplement containing 8.5 to 10µg of vitamin D, to make sure they get enough
- Babies fed infant formula should not be given a vitamin D supplement until they are receiving less than 500ml (about a pint) of infant formula a day, because infant formula is fortified with vitamin D
- Children aged one to four years old should be given a daily supplement containing 10µg of vitamin D.

In addition, government recommends that children aged from six months to five years are given daily vitamin supplements containing vitamins A (233µg) and C (20mg). This is a precautionary measure, to ensure that their requirements for these nutrients are met, at a time when it is difficult to be certain that the diet provides a reliable source. More details are available on the NHS choices website.[26]

In 2006, the Healthy Start Scheme[27] replaced the Welfare Food Scheme. Families receiving Healthy Start vouchers can use them to purchase plain cows' milk, fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables, or infant formula suitable from birth. The scheme also provides free Healthy Start vitamin supplements for pregnant women and women with a child aged under 12 months. Children receiving Healthy Start vouchers qualify for free children's vitamin drops containing vitamins A, C and D from aged six months until their fourth birthday.

The scheme aims to engage with parents from early pregnancy to ensure that they are provided with information on healthy eating and the appropriate use of vitamin supplements for children. It is the responsibility of parents to administer these supplements. Early years settings can, however, encourage parents who are eligible, to apply for vouchers to help pay for food provided at home.

Nursery Milk Scheme

The Nursery Milk Scheme enables registered early years settings to claim reimbursement for the cost of a third of a pint (189ml) or, where supplied in 200ml containers only, with 200ml of milk for each child aged under five years who attends for two or more hours a day. For more information, visit the Nursery Milk Scheme website.[28]

Physical activity

Regular physical activity during the early years provides immediate and long-term benefits for physical and psychological wellbeing. Physical activity has very low risks for most under fives, whereas the risk that childhood inactivity will lead to poor health in later life is high.[29] All children aged under five years should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (being restrained or sitting) for extended periods (except time spent sleeping).

Physical activity includes all forms of activity, such as walking, active play and active games. Children are more likely to maintain a healthy weight if they are physically active for at least 180 minutes (three hours) each day, as recommended for children aged under five years in the UK.[29]

All children under five should minimise time spent being sedentary.

02

Planning menus

Seven steps for planning healthy meals, snacks and drinks

It is important that the food and drink provided for children is balanced across each day, and that children eat regularly, with breakfast, lunch, tea, and two or three snacks provided daily (either within an early years setting or at home). Using these food and drink guidelines to plan meals and snacks for children will help to make sure that all children eat a healthy, balanced diet, whether they attend full-day care in one setting, or attend several settings throughout the week.

STEP 1. **Plan menus for all the meals and snacks you provide for children**.

This will help you to check that food and drink provision across the day is balanced and includes variety, and also helps planning for shopping and food preparation.

STEP 2. **Step 2. Plan menus lasting at least one week**.

In practice, a menu that covers between one and four weeks will give children lots of variety. Try to make sure that children who attend your setting on the same day each week are not always provided with the same meal.

STEP 3.

Plan each meal and snack menu to meet the food and drink guidelines in this guide.

This means that children attending your setting for sessional care or who move between different settings will still meet their nutritional requirements overall.

STEP 4.

Plan menus to include a variety of foods, tastes, textures and colours.

This will give children opportunity to try a wide range of foods, and make meals and snacks colourful and tasty.

STEP 5.

Make sure you cater for the cultural and dietary needs of all the children in your care.

You can also plan your menus to enable children to experience food from different cultures. You will find more information about this on page 50.

STEP 6.

Introduce new menu cycles at least twice a year.

This will incorporate seasonality and give children the chance to try different foods.

STEP 7. **Share menus for meals and snacks with parents**

This can help parents to balance meals and snacks with the food they provide at home. For example, if children are having a light meal at teatime and you expect them to eat again at home, make sure that parents are aware of this.

The Children's House Nursery uses a 12 day menu cycle, which means that children attending on one or two days a week receive a wide variety of different meals.

Childminder Sandra Cook found that introducing a rolling three week menu instead of planning menus each week saves her time.

Practical tools for menu planning

In section 6, you will find practical tools to help you plan menus for meals and snacks, including:

- a menu planning checklist to evaluate menus against the food and drink guidelines
- example spring/summer and autumn/winter menus meeting the food and drink guidelines.

03

The food and drink guidelines

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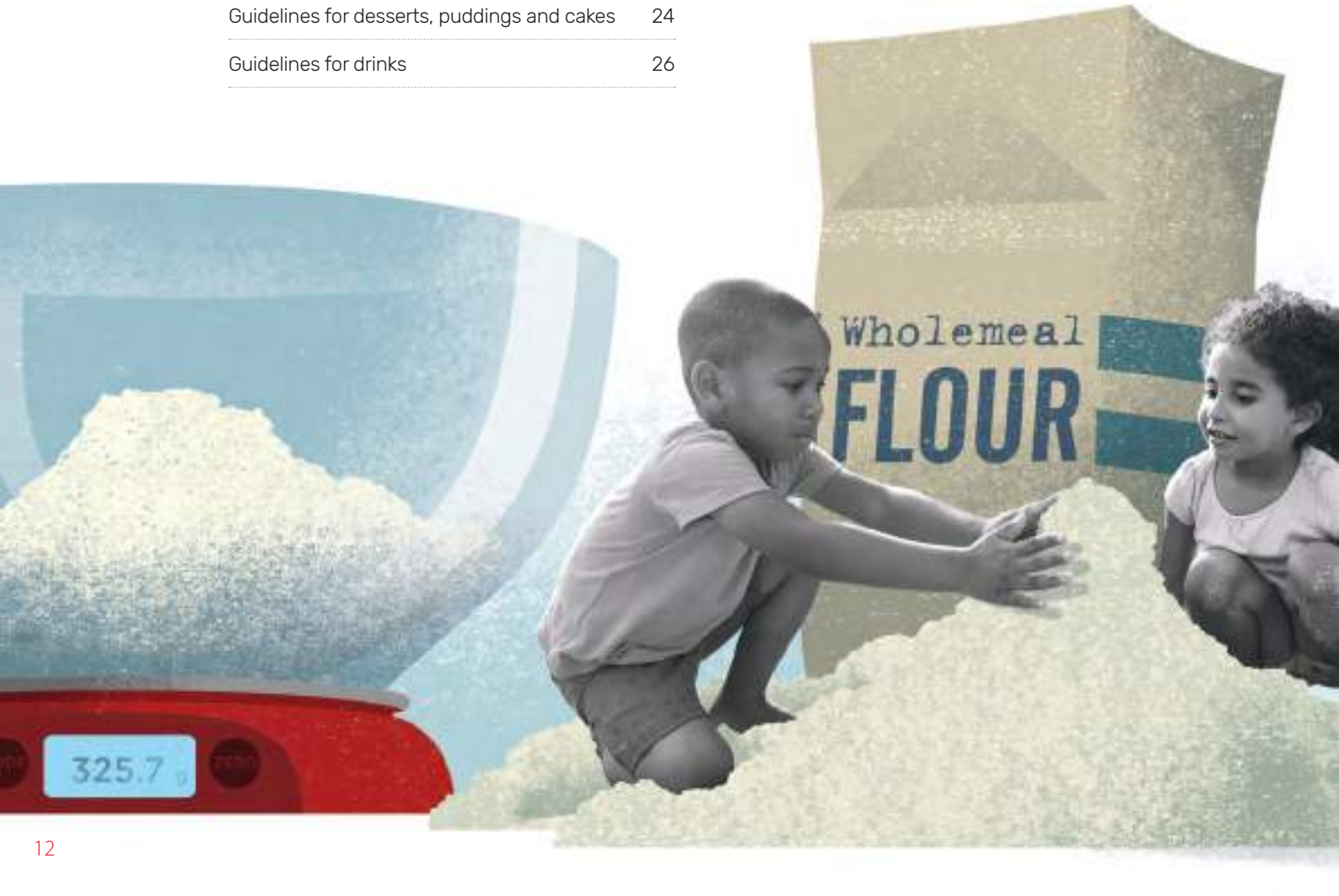


The food and drink guidelines in this section describe how often, how much, and which types of food from each of the four food groups should be provided for children aged one to four years.* Following these guidelines will help to make sure that the food and drink you provide is healthy, balanced and nutritious.

The food and drink guidelines are underpinned by a nutrient framework, which includes energy and key nutrients: protein, fat, carbohydrate, dietary fibre, free sugars, vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, zinc, calcium and sodium. Providing the types and amounts of food and drink outlined by the guidelines will ensure children receive appropriate amounts of energy and these nutrients. For further information about the nutrient framework, see page 70.

Use the guidelines to plan which food and drinks to provide as part of meals and snacks for children in your care.

The food and drink guidelines are also listed for each separate meal (breakfast, lunch and tea) and snack in section 4 (page 34). This information can be used to check that the guidelines are met for each mealtime.

Information included in this section explains:

- **The types of food and drink included in each food group**. This will help you to choose a variety of food and drinks for children's meals and snacks.
- **Why each food group is important**. This outlines the key nutrients each food group provides and explains their importance for children's health.
- **Guidelines for planning menus**. These outline how frequently to provide foods from each food group, how to limit saturated fat, salt and sugar, and food safety considerations.
- **Typical portion sizes for children aged one to four years**.* Portion sizes are based on the energy and nutrient requirements of children aged one to four years. In order to ensure that the energy and nutrient needs of those in the group with the highest requirements are met, these are based on estimated average energy requirements for children aged three to four years, and for other nutrients, on the highest requirements within the one to four year age range. This means that the typical portion sizes will be appropriate for children with the highest requirements (generally children aged three to four years), and smaller portion sizes may be appropriate for children younger than this (children one to two years old).

However, remember that children's requirements for growth and activity, and their appetites will vary; they should be encouraged to eat healthy food according to their appetite.

Providing the types and amounts of food and drink outlined by the guidelines will ensure children receive appropriate amounts of energy and nutrients.

* Portion sizes are typical example portion sizes for children aged one to four years and are not suitable for children under the age of one year.

Understanding the food and drink guidelines

How to use portion size information

The nutrient content of food and drink provided for children depends on the portion size of the food and drink that is offered. The food and drink guidelines in this section include examples of typical portion sizes of different food and drink for children aged one to four years.** The typical portion sizes given are for food as served. In some cases this will be cooked food. It is important to note that the weight of many foods can change during cooking due to water loss or gain. For example 35g of raw pasta will weigh approximately 80g once cooked, and 35g of minced beef will weigh approximately 30g once cooked.

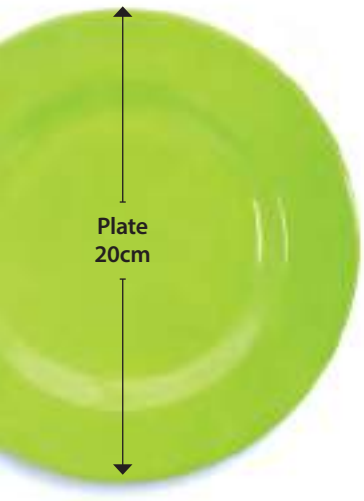
The food photos illustrate typical portion sizes for one to four year olds. The actual portion size of each food is specified under the photograph.

The actual sizes of the plates and bowls included in pictures throughout this section are listed below:

- Small bowl: 8cm
- Large bowl: 12cm
- Plate: 20cm

These diameters have been listed to help you to visualise the actual size of the portions shown; the full size plates and bowls are pictured on pages 77 and 78.

Note: the bowls and plates are not to scale and the colours of the small bowl, large bowl and plate vary in the photographs.



** Portion sizes are typical example portion sizes for children aged one to four years and are not suitable for children under one year of age.

The following symbols and terms are used throughout the guide to highlight points to follow when planning menus for meals, snacks and drinks. Limiting or avoiding some foods, ingredients and cooking practices will help to ensure that menus are healthy, balanced and nutritious.

Key to symbols

Food and drink guidelines – use these to plan your meals and snacks.

Good practice – consider these when planning your meals and snacks.

Food safety – follow this food safety advice for young children.

Limit Where the guidelines advise that food or drinks should be limited, these should be provided no more than once a week. This will help to decrease the amount of salt, sugar and saturated fat in children's diets and increase the variety of food and drinks they are offered.

Avoid Where the guidelines advise that food or drinks should be avoided, these should not be provided as part of any meals or snacks.

Summary of the four food groups and the nutrients they provide

The table on this page gives an overview of the four food groups. You will find detailed information about each food group on pages 16–23.

Food groups	Examples of food included	Main nutrients provided	Recommended servings
Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates	Bread, potatoes and sweet potatoes, starchy root vegetables, pasta, noodles, rice, other grains, breakfast cereals	Carbohydrate, fibre, B vitamins and iron	Four portions each day Provide a portion as part of each meal (breakfast, lunch and tea) and provide as part of at least one snack each day
Fruit and vegetables	Fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruit, vegetables, and pulses	Carotenes (a form of vitamin A), vitamin C, zinc, iron, and fibre	Five portions each day Provide a portion as part of each main meal (breakfast, lunch and tea) and with some snacks
Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins	Meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, eggs, meat alternatives, pulses, nuts*	Protein, iron, zinc, omega 3 fatty acids, vitamins A and D	Two portions each day Provide a portion as part of lunch and tea (Two to three portions for vegetarian children)
Dairy and alternatives	Milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais, custard, puddings made from milk	Protein, calcium, and vitamin A	Three portions each day provided as part of meals, snacks and drinks

* Be allergy aware – information about food allergies and developing an allergy plan is available from **www.allergyuk.org**

Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates

Food and drink guidelines

Good practice

Food safety

What does this food group include?

Bread, potatoes and sweet potatoes, starchy root vegetables, pasta and noodles, rice, other grains and breakfast cereals.

Wholegrain starchy foods include wholemeal bread and bread products, wholewheat pasta, brown rice, oats and wholegrain breakfast cereals.

Why is this food group important?

Starchy foods provide energy, carbohydrate, fibre and B vitamins.

Fortified breakfast cereals can also be a good source of iron.

REMEMBER

- Provide a variety of starchy foods.
- Check typical portion sizes in the table on page 17.
- Choose products lower in salt, saturated fat and sugar.

Guidelines for planning menus

How frequently should foods from this group be provided?

- Provide a portion of starchy food as part of each meal.
- Provide a starchy food as part of at least one snack each day.
- Provide at least three different varieties of starchy food across each day, and across each meal and snack every week.
- Provide a variety of wholegrain and white starchy foods each week.
- It is good practice to provide wholegrain starchy foods for at least one breakfast, lunch and tea each week. Young children can have some wholegrain starchy foods, but should not eat only wholegrain options, as they can fill up before they have taken in the energy they need.

Limiting saturated fat, salt and sugar

Some processed starchy foods can be high in salt, saturated fat and sugar. Use the guidelines below and the information about food labelling on page 30 to limit these products, and choose versions which are lower in salt, saturated fat and sugar.

- Choose breakfast cereals with the lowest sugar content. Choose those which are labelled as 'low' (green) or 'medium' (amber) in sugar. Avoid cereals labelled as 'high' (red) in sugar such as sugar-coated or chocolate-flavoured cereals.
- Choose bread and bread products with a lower salt content. Choose those which are labelled as 'low' (green) or 'medium' (amber) in salt.
- Limit starchy foods which have been fried (in the kitchen or during manufacture), such as chips and roast potatoes, to once a week at lunch and once a week at tea, as these can be high in fat.
- Limit canned pasta in sauce (such as spaghetti hoops).
- Avoid flavoured dried rice, pasta and noodle products e.g. packets and pots of instant flavoured noodles, pasta and rice.

Good choices of foods to serve	Typical portion sizes as served (cooked)††	Portion sizes in practice, images not to scale††
Bread: includes white, wholemeal, granary, brown, wheatgerm and multigrain breads, soda bread, potato bread, chapattis, plain baked naan bread, plain baked rotis, rolls, plain bagels, pitta bread, wraps, tortilla, breadsticks, crackers and oatcakes.	1½ small slices or 1 large slice bread (20–30g) ½–1 muffin, bread roll or pitta bread or 1 mini version (25–50g) 2–4 mini breadsticks (8–10g), 1–2 crackers (8–16g) or 1–2 oatcakes (10–20g)	Wholemeal toast (25g) Pitta bread (35g) Rice cakes (16g)
Potatoes or sweet potatoes: includes boiled, mashed, jacket and baked.	1 small baked or 1–2 boiled potatoes (80–100g) 2–3 tablespoons mashed potato (80–100g)	New potatoes (90g) Mashed sweet potato (90g) Jacket potato (90g)
Other starchy root vegetables: includes boiled, mashed or baked yam, plantain, cocoyam and cassava.	1 small baked root vegetable (80–100g) 2–3 tablespoons mashed, diced starchy vegetables (80–100g)	
Pasta and noodles: includes boiled white and wholemeal spaghetti, noodles and pasta shapes.	3–4 tablespoons pasta or noodles (80g–100g)	White spaghetti (90g) Couscous (90g) Brown rice (90g)
Rice: includes boiled white and brown rice.	2–3 tablespoons rice (80g–100g)	
Other grains: includes couscous, bulgur wheat, maize (polenta) and cornmeal.	2–3 tablespoons grains (80g–100g)	
Low or medium sugar breakfast cereals includes porridge, cornflakes, wheat biscuits and crisped rice cereal.	3–5 tablespoons breakfast cereal (20g–30g) 2 wheat biscuits (35g) ⅓–½ bowl porridge made with milk (100–110g)	Rice crispies (25g) Corn flakes (25g) Porridge (100g)

†† Portion sizes are typical example portion sizes for children aged one to four years, and are not suitable for children under one year old.

Fruit and vegetables

Food and drink guidelines

Good practice

Food safety

What does this food group include?

Fruit and vegetables in all forms, including fresh, frozen, canned, and dried.

Pulses, such as beans and lentils, can be served as a vegetable alongside meat, fish or a meat alternative.

Potatoes are classed as a starchy food and are therefore not included in this food group.

Why is this food group important?

Fruit and vegetables are an important source of vitamins including vitamin A and C, minerals such as zinc and iron, and dietary fibre.

REMEMBER

- Provide a variety of fruit and vegetables.
- Check typical portion sizes in the table on page 19.
- Provide dried fruit and canned fruit at meal times only.
- Check labels and choose:
  - vegetables and pulses canned without added salt and sugar
  - fruit canned in natural juice not syrup
- Avoid fruit juice (even diluted fruit juice).

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.

Guidelines for planning menus

How frequently should foods from this group be provided?

- Provide a portion of beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat, or other proteins as part of lunch and tea.
- Provide a portion of vegetable and/or fruit at each meal and with some snacks.
- Provide a variety of vegetables and fruits, aiming to offer at least four different types during full day care, and two different types during sessional care.
- Provide dried fruit at meal times only rather than as a snack, as it contains sugars that can stick to and may damage children's teeth.
- Avoid fruit juice (even diluted fruit juice). Fruit juice (including fruit juice from concentrate) provides nutrients such as vitamin C but it also contains large amounts of fruit sugar (fructose), and is acidic. Fruit sugar and acid can cause tooth decay in children.

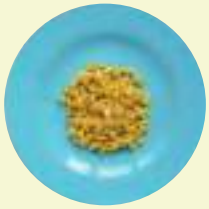
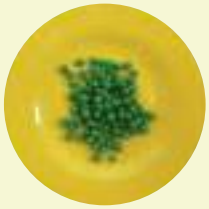
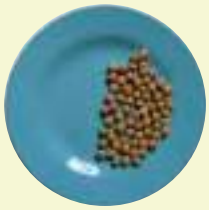
Limiting saturated fat, salt and sugar

Some canned fruit and vegetables contain added salt and sugar. Use the guidelines below and information about food labelling on page 30 to choose varieties that are lower in salt and sugar.

- Choose canned vegetables and pulses without added salt and sugar.
- Choose fruit canned in natural juice without added sugar or syrup.
- Provide fruit canned in natural juice at mealtimes only.
- Choose reduced salt and sugar baked beans. Baked beans can only count as a vegetable once each week.

Preparing and cooking fruit and vegetables

- Cut up fruit and vegetables just before you serve or cook them to minimise the vitamins lost.
- Do not overcook vegetables, as this will reduce the vitamin content.

Good choices of foods to serve	Typical portion sizes as served††	Portion sizes in practice, images not to scale††
Vegetables: includes vegetables served with meals and within dishes, such as carrots, green beans, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, courgettes, peppers, leeks, onions, okra, swede, pak choi and sweetcorn.	1–2 tablespoons cooked vegetables (40g) Small bowl vegetable soup (150g)	Carrots and peas (40g)  Sweetcorn (40g)  Peas (40g)
Salad vegetables: includes lettuce, other leaves, watercress, celery, cucumber, tomato, raw carrot, raw pepper, radish and beetroot.	4–6 raw vegetable sticks (40g)	
Pulses: includes beans (such as kidney beans, haricot beans, butter beans, pinto beans, broad beans), chickpeas, red and green lentils, split peas, processed peas and baked beans.	½–1 tablespoons pulses (40g)	Lentils (40g)  Chickpeas (40g) Soya beans (40g)
Fresh fruit: includes fruit served with meals, as snacks, and as fruit-based desserts, such as bananas, pears, grapes, kiwi fruit, oranges, plums, berries, melon, apple crumble and fruit salad.	½ large piece of fruit such as half an apple or pear (40g) 2–3 small fruits e.g. apricots (40g) 1–2 tablespoons berries e.g. raspberries (40g)	
Canned fruit in natural juice: includes pear, peaches, pineapple, mandarin oranges, prunes and guava.	1–2 tablespoons fruit canned in natural juice (40–65g)	
Stewed fruit without added sugar: includes stewed apple, stewed dried fruit and stewed plums.	1–2 tablespoons stewed fruit (40g)	Apple (40g) Stewed fruit (40g) Dried apricots (25g)
Dried fruit (at meal times only): includes raisins, dried apricots, dates, dried figs and prunes.	½–1 tablespoon or 2–5 pieces dried fruit (15–30g)	

For this food group the typical portion sizes stated above may be for a single fruit or vegetable or a combination of more than one type. For example: vegetable provided at lunch, could be one type of vegetable (e.g. 40g carrots), or two different vegetables (e.g. 20g carrots and 20g peas). Fruit provided as a snack could be served as one type (e.g. 40g sliced apple) or more than one type of fruit (e.g. 20g sliced apple, 20g banana).

†† Portion sizes are typical example portion sizes for children aged one to four years, and are not suitable for children under one year old.

Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins

Food and drink guidelines
Good practice
Food safety

Food safety

Make sure fish dishes are free of bones.

Avoid shark, swordfish and marlin as the levels of mercury in these fish can affect a child's developing nervous system.

Avoid raw shellfish to reduce the risk of food poisoning, and make sure any shellfish you use is thoroughly cooked.

Avoid raw eggs, or food containing partially cooked eggs, for example uncooked cake mixture and runny boiled eggs.

Do not give whole nuts to children under five years old, as they can choke on them.

Nuts, especially peanuts, can cause severe allergic reactions in some children and all settings should have an allergy plan in place. You can find information at: **www.allergyuk.org**

What does this food group include?

Fresh or frozen meat and poultry, fresh, frozen or canned fish, shellfish, eggs, meat alternatives (such as Quorn™ or soya mince), pulses (such as beans, chickpeas and lentils) and nuts.*

Why is this food group important?

Food from this group provides protein, iron and zinc. Oily fish provides omega 3 fatty acids, vitamin A and vitamin D.

Guidelines for planning menus

How frequently should foods from this group be provided?

- Provide a portion of beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat, or other proteins as part of lunch and tea.
- Food from this group can be provided as part of snacks once or twice each week.
- Provide a variety of foods from this group as part of lunches and teas every day and across the week.
- It is good practice to provide a portion each of beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat (e.g. red meat and poultry) or other proteins (e.g. meat alternatives) each week as part of lunch and tea.
- Provide one lunch and one tea for all children each week which uses pulses or a meat alternative as the protein source.
- Provide vegetarian children with two or three portions of pulses, eggs, meat alternatives or nuts* each day.
- Provide vegetarian children with a variety of protein sources such as pulses, eggs and meat alternatives each week as part of lunch and tea.
- Provide oily fish (such as salmon, sardines or pilchards) at least once every three weeks, but not more than twice each week, as it can contain low levels of pollutants. Note: canned salmon counts as an oily fish but canned tuna does not, as the omega 3 fatty acids in tuna are removed during the canning process.
- Guidance on choosing fish from sustainable sources can be found on page 55.

Limiting saturated fat, salt and sugar

- Check product labels to choose canned pulses without added salt and sugar.
- Choose reduced salt and sugar baked beans.

Meat and fish products, and products made from meat alternatives can be high in salt and saturated fat. Making homemade versions of these products can ensure that the fat and salt content is lower, but it is important that children get used to having food which looks and tastes different. Limiting both bought and homemade versions of these products helps give children the opportunity to try foods of other textures and tastes. Use the guidelines below and the information about food labelling on page 30 to limit these products and choose versions that are lower in saturated fat and salt.

- Limit bought and homemade meat products to no more than once a week. These include sausages, burgers, nuggets, sausage rolls, individual pies and canned meat. If you do provide them, choose good quality products with a high meat content.
- Limit bought and homemade fish products to no more than once a week. These include fish fingers and other coated fish products.
- Limit bought and homemade products made from meat alternatives to no more than once a week. These include vegetarian sausages, burgers, nuggets and pies.

REMEMBER

- Provide a variety of foods from this food group.
- Check typical portion sizes in the table on page 21.
- Limit provision of bought and homemade meat, fish and meat alternative products.

* Be allergy aware – information about food allergies and developing an allergy plan is available from **www.allergyuk.org**

Good choices of foods to serve	Typical portion sizes as served (cooked)††	Portion sizes in practice, images not to scale††
Meat: includes beef, lamb, pork, mutton and venison.	Meat and poultry served by itself: 1 slice or 1–2 tablespoons chopped meat (30–40g) Meat and poultry in sauces and stews: 2–3 tablespoons (90g–120g)	Chicken (40g) Pork (40g) Beef bolognaise (110g)
Poultry: includes chicken, turkey and duck.		
White fish: includes cod, haddock, plaice, coley, pollack, halibut, hake and canned tuna.	Fish served by itself: 1 slice or ½ fillet or 1–2 tablespoons (30–40g) Fish in sauces and stews: 2–3 tablespoons (90g–120g)	Tuna (40g) Salmon (40g) White fish (40g)
Oily fish: includes salmon, mackerel, trout, herring/kippers, sardines, pilchards, whitebait and fresh tuna.		
Shellfish: includes prawns, mussels, shrimps and crab.	Prawns served by themselves: 1–2 tablespoons (30–40g)	
Eggs: includes boiled, scrambled and poached.	Eggs served by themselves: 1 egg (50g)	Boiled egg (50g) Kidney beans (40g) Baked beans (55g)
Meat alternatives: includes soya bean products such as soya mince and tofu, textured vegetable protein and Quorn™.	Meat alternatives served by themselves: 1–2 tablespoons (30–50g) Meat alternatives in sauces and stews: 2–3 tablespoons (90–120g)	
Pulses: includes beans (such as kidney beans, haricot beans, butter beans, pinto beans, broad beans), chick peas, red and green lentils, split peas, processed peas and baked beans.	Pulses served by themselves: 1–2 tablespoons (30–50g) Pulses in sauces and stews: 2–3 tablespoons (90–120g)	
Ground nuts* **and nut butters**: includes ground almonds, hazelnuts, brazil nuts, peanuts, peanut butter and cashew butter.	Ground nuts/peanuts served by themselves: 1–2 tablespoons (30–50g)	

†† Portion sizes are typical example portion sizes for children aged one to four years, and are not suitable for children under one year old.

* Be allergy aware – information about food allergies and developing an allergy plan is available from **www.allergyuk.org**

Dairy and alternatives

Food and drink guidelines

Good practice

Food safety

What does this food group include?

Milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais, custard, puddings made from milk and milk-based sauces.

Butter and cream are not included as part of this food group as they are classified as foods high in fat. There is further guidance on foods high in fat on page 27.

Why is this food group important?

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

REMEMBER

- It is best practice to provide three portions of milk and dairy foods each day (including those provided at home).
- If only one type of milk or dairy foods are available, or if you are catering for children under two years old, use whole milk and full fat dairy foods to make sure that younger children or those who do not eat well do not miss out on important nutrients.
- Check typical portion sizes in the table on page 23.
- Choose yoghurt and fromage frais that are lower in sugar. Further information about reading labels is on page 30.

Food safety

Avoid unpasteurised milk, milk drinks and cheese, mould-ripened cheeses (such as brie or camembert) and soft blue-veined cheeses (such as Danish blue or gorgonzola) as these may cause food poisoning in young children.

Children aged under five years should not be given rice drinks as they have been found to contain small amounts of arsenic.

Guidelines for planning menus

How frequently should foods from this group be provided?

It is best practice to provide three portions of milk and dairy foods each day (including those provided at home).

Which milk and dairy products should be provided?

Whole (full fat) milk should be given to children aged from one to two years as their main drink, to make sure they get enough energy and nutrients.

Children over the age of two can have semi-skimmed milk if they are growing well and eating a healthy, balanced diet. Refer to guidance on page 55 about children growing well.

Avoid skimmed milk and skimmed milk products, as these are low in fat and do not provide enough energy for children under five.

Use full-fat yoghurts, fromage frais, cheese and cream cheese for children up to the age of two. Children over the age of two who are growing well and eating a healthy balanced diet can have low-fat varieties.

Goats' and sheep's milk can be provided for children over the age of one year.[‡‡]

Unsweetened calcium fortified soya drink can be used as a non-dairy alternative to cows' milk for children aged over one year, and can be given as a main drink from two years.[§§]

Limiting saturated fat, salt and sugar

Some dairy products can contain added sugar. Use the guidelines below and the food labelling information on page 30 to choose products that are lower in sugar.

Choose yoghurt and fromage frais with a lower sugar content, those which are labelled as 'low' (green) or 'medium' (amber) in sugar.

Avoid ice cream and sweetened frozen yoghurt between meals. Limit ice cream to once a week with fruit-based desserts at meal times.

Choose dairy ice cream, as it contains more calcium than non-dairy varieties.

Avoid canned milks, sweetened milk drinks and sweetened milkshakes, as these contain added sugar.

[‡‡] Be allergy aware: goats' and sheep's milk are not suitable alternatives for children with an allergy or intolerance to cows' milk.

[§§] Be allergy aware: soya milk is not a suitable alternative for all children with an allergy or intolerance to cows' milk.

Good choices of foods to serve	Typical portion sizes as served††	Portion sizes in practice, images not to scale††
Milk: includes pasteurised cows', goats' or sheep's milk. **Milk alternatives**: includes plain soya milk drinks enriched with calcium*.	Milk drinks: ½ cup (100ml–150ml)	 Whole milk (100ml)
Cheese: includes hard and soft cheeses. Use cheese that is labelled as vegetarian for children who avoid animal products.	Hard cheese: 1–2 tablespoons grated (15–20g) Soft cheese: (20g–25g)	 Grated cheddar (15g) Mozzarella (17g) Cheese spread (18g)
Yoghurt and fromage frais: includes natural (plain) yoghurt and fromage frais, and yoghurt drinks.	Small pot (60g) or ½ large individual pot (half of 125–140g), or 1–2 tablespoons (50–75g) Unsweetened yoghurt drinks (60g)	 Custard (60g) Rice pudding (75g) Yoghurt (60g)
Custard and milk-based puddings: includes custard made with milk, rice pudding and semolina pudding.	Custard: 3–4 tablespoons (50–75g) Rice pudding: 3–4 tablespoons (70–90g) Semolina: 3–4 tablespoons (85–110g)	

†† Portion sizes are typical example portion sizes for children aged one to four years, and are not suitable for children under one year old.

* Be allergy aware: soya drink is not a suitable alternative for all children with an allergy or intolerance to cows' milk.
For information about providing food and drink for children with food allergies and intolerances, please refer to page 48.

Guidelines for desserts, puddings and cakes

Food and drink guidelines

Good practice

Desserts, puddings and cakes made with cereals, milk or fruit can be included as part of a healthy, balanced diet for young children.

Why and how to provide desserts, puddings and cakes

- Desserts, puddings and cakes made with cereals (such as rice or oats), milk and fruit can be included as part of a healthy, balanced diet for young children.
- Desserts and cakes provide energy (calories) and essential nutrients such as calcium and iron.

REMEMBER

- Provide a dessert as part of lunch and tea each day.
- Vary the desserts you offer with lunch and tea each week. For main meals (typically lunch), provide a variety of different desserts each week (e.g. fruit-based such as apple crumble, dairy-based desserts such as rice pudding) and limit provision of cakes and biscuits. For light meals (typically tea) provide fruit (such as seasonal fruit salad) and/or dairy-based desserts such as yoghurt, and avoid cakes and biscuits.
- Avoid sweet foods such as cakes, biscuits and confectionery between meals and at teatime, and limit at lunchtime.

Guidelines for planning menus

- A dessert should be provided as part of lunch and tea each day.
- Vary the desserts you offer with lunch and tea each week. For main meals (typically lunch), provide a variety of different desserts each week (e.g. fruit-based such as apple crumble, dairy-based desserts such as rice pudding) and limit provision of cakes and biscuits. For light meals (typically tea) provide fruit (such as seasonal fruit salad) and/or dairy-based desserts such as yoghurt, and avoid cakes and biscuits.
- Avoid all sweet foods (including cakes, biscuits, sweet muffins, cookies, flapjacks, pastries, chocolate and sweets) as snacks between meals as these can damage children's teeth.
- Limit confectionery such as chocolate chips and hundreds and thousands and use only as part of cakes or desserts.
- Settings may wish to avoid artificial sweeteners when choosing or preparing desserts, puddings and cakes.
- Fruit contains sugar and can be used to sweeten desserts, puddings and cakes. Some sour fruits, such as stewed rhubarb or gooseberries, may need a small amount of sugar added to make them less sour.
- Desserts which include fruit should aim to include 40g of fresh fruit or 20g dried fruit per portion.
- If providing ice cream, choose dairy ice cream as it contains more calcium than non-dairy ice cream, and limit to once a week with fruit-based desserts at meal times.

Type of dessert	Typical portion sizes (as served; cooked)[††]	Typical portion sizes in practice, images not to scale
Hot fruit-based desserts	Apple and rhubarb crumble (60g) with custard (60g) Crunchy summer crumble (60g) and yoghurt (60g)	
Milk-based desserts	Rice pudding (75g) with sultanas (25g) Semolina (85g) with blackberry compote (40g)	
Yoghurt or fromage frais	Yoghurt (60g) and dates (25g) Fromage frais (60g) and raspberry purée (40g)	
Cakes or biscuits containing fruit	Blueberry muffin (35-40g) Banana and raisin flapjack (35-40g)	
Cold desserts	Seasonal fruit salad (40g) Winter fruit salad (40g) with vanilla sauce (60g)	

[††] Portion sizes are typical example portion sizes for children aged one to four years, and are not suitable for children under one year old.

Guidelines for drinks

Food and drink guidelines

Good practice

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

Water and milk are the only drinks that should be provided as they do not damage teeth or increase children's risk of dental decay.

Why and how to provide drinks

- Children must have access to drinking water throughout the day and be encouraged to help themselves to water.
- Children need six to eight drinks (each of 100–150 ml) each day to make sure they get enough fluid.
- 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.

REMEMBER

- Ensure children have access to drinking water throughout the day.
- Provide only fresh tap water and plain milk for children to drink.
- Avoid fruit juice, diluted fruit juice, fruit juice drinks, squash, fizzy drinks, flavoured water and drinks containing added caffeine or other stimulants.

Guidelines for drink provision

- 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. You will find guidance on which milk to provide on page 22.
- Avoid fruit juice (even diluted fruit juice). Fruit juice (including fruit juice from concentrate) provides nutrients such as vitamin C but it also contains large amounts of fruit sugar (fructose), and is acidic. Fruit sugar and acid can cause tooth decay.
- Avoid fruit juice drinks. Products labelled as fruit juice drinks generally contain only a small proportion of fruit juice with water and added sugar or sweeteners, and provide little nutritional value.
- Avoid all soft drinks such as squash, fizzy drinks, energy drinks and flavoured water, even if they are labelled 'sugar-free', 'no-added-sugar' or 'reduced sugar'. These drinks can contribute to tooth decay and provide little nutritional value.
- Avoid tea, coffee, cola and other drinks or foods with added caffeine or other stimulants. These are not recommended for young children, as caffeine is a stimulant which can disturb children's sleep, behaviour and concentration. Tea and coffee also contain tannins which can interfere with a child's ability to absorb iron.
- Alcohol should never be given to children under five years old. It is illegal in the UK to give an alcoholic drink to a child under five.[30]

Guidelines for fat

Why do young children need fat in their diets?

Fat provides:

- a concentrated source of energy (calories). Some fat in the diet is important to ensure that young children get all the energy they need to grow and be active
- vitamins A, D and E, which are important for growth, a healthy immune system, and healthy bones and teeth
- essential fatty acids (including omega 3 fatty acids found in oily fish), which our bodies cannot make, and are needed for the development of our brains and other tissues.

How much fat do young children need?

- Young children, especially children under two years old, need more energy from fat than older children and adults.
- However, if children regularly have foods high in fat (such as fried foods, biscuits, cakes, pastries or savoury snacks), they may be consuming more calories than they need and may gain excess weight. Offering the sorts of meals and snacks suggested in this guide and the example menus will ensure that children have the appropriate amount of fat in their diet.
- Between the ages of two and five, children should gradually move towards the diet recommended for older children and adults, with less energy provided from fat.

Providing the right type and amount of fat to young children

The type of fat that young children eat is important. There are two types of fat:

- saturated fat which comes mainly from animal sources (including cheese, meat and meat products like sausages, butter, cakes and biscuits)
- unsaturated fat which comes mainly from plants and fish (including vegetable oils such as sunflower or olive oils, fat spreads and oily fish).

A diet high in saturated fat can, over time, cause high cholesterol levels and increase the risk of coronary heart disease, diabetes and some cancers. This is why it is best to limit the amount of saturated fat that children eat, and provide some fat as unsaturated fats instead.

Limiting saturated fat

- Limit bought and homemade meat products (e.g. sausages, meatballs) to no more than once a week. If you do serve meat products, choose good quality versions with a high meat content.
- Limit starchy foods which have been fried (in the kitchen or during manufacture), such as chips and roast potatoes, to once a week at lunch and once a week at tea.
- Limit the use of pastry to once a week, as it can be high in fat and saturated fat.
- Use as little oil in cooking as possible, and choose a cooking oil high in unsaturated fats, such as vegetable, rapeseed, sunflower or olive oil.
- Grill or bake food instead of frying.
- If food is deep-fried use an unsaturated oil and change it regularly.
- Choose lean cuts of meat, and remove visible fat and skin from poultry.
- For sandwiches and toast, use fat spreads made from vegetable oils which are high in unsaturated fats such as sunflower and olive oil.

Food and drink guidelines

Good practice

REMEMBER

- Young children need more energy from fat than older children and adults.
- Limit the amount of saturated fat children eat, and provide some unsaturated fat.

Guidelines for salt

Food and drink guidelines

Good practice

Why is it important to limit the amount of salt that young children eat?

- Salt is needed to maintain fluid balance in the body and for nerve and muscle function.
- Having too much salt can give children a taste for salty foods and could lead to high blood pressure in later life, which may cause more serious conditions such as stroke, heart disease and kidney problems.
- The maximum amount of salt that children should have each day is:

Recommendations for maximum salt/sodium intakes for young children[31]		
	1–3 years	**4–6 years**
Salt (g)	2.0	3.0
Sodium (g)	0.8	1.2
Sodium (mg)	800	1200

Salt and sodium are not the same.
To convert sodium to salt, multiply by 2.5.
To convert salt to sodium, divide by 2.5.

REMEMBER

- Limit the amount of salt that young children eat.
- Do not add salt when cooking for young children.
- Limit the use of processed foods, and cook food from scratch wherever possible.
- Check labels on packaging and choose products lower in salt.

How to limit the amount of salt that children eat

Most salt that young children eat is found in processed foods. Using the food and drink guidelines to limit these foods, and checking product labels to choose products lower in salt, will help to reduce the salt content of the food you provide.

- Do not add salt when cooking for young children. Instead, flavour savoury dishes using a variety of vegetables, herbs and spices.
- Do not provide salt for children to add to their food.
- Limit the use of ready made sauces (dried or liquid), soups, stocks and gravy granules. Instead cook sauces from raw ingredients, and thicken sauces with cornflour instead of gravy granules.
- Limit bought and homemade meat products (e.g. sausages, meatballs), to no more than once a week.
- Limit the use of condiments such as ketchup.
- Avoid salty snacks such as crisps.
- Cook from raw ingredients. Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, pulses, fruits, vegetables and many starchy foods are naturally low in salt.
- When choosing bought foods, such as bread and bread products, crackers, and meat products, check the label and choose varieties that are lower in salt. Choose those which are labelled as 'low' (green) or 'medium' (amber) in salt, use the labelling guidance on page 30 of this guide to help you do this.

Flavour enhancers

- Flavour enhancers are used to bring out the flavour in foods, and can be high in sodium. A commonly used flavour enhance is monosodium glutamate (E621; also known as MSG).
- Monosodium glutamate is used in processed foods such as soups, sauces and sausages. To find out if a product contains MSG (E621) read the ingredient list on the label.
- Avoid providing food containing flavour enhancers by checking the label. This will also help to reduce the amount of salt.

Guidelines for sugar

Why is it important to limit the amount of sugar that young children eat?

Young children are particularly vulnerable to tooth decay, because the enamel on their teeth is not as strong as on adult teeth. Decay in children's first teeth can affect the development of their adult teeth.

Tooth decay is caused by having sugary food and drinks too often. Bacteria in the mouth consume the sugar and produce acids, which attack the surfaces of the teeth. If this happens frequently, holes form in the teeth. Limiting the amount of sugary food and drinks that children have, and how often they have them, reduces their risk of tooth decay.

Food such as fruit and milk contain sugars, but these sugars are not as damaging to children's teeth as the sugar in food such as sweets, cakes, chocolate, fizzy drinks, fruit juice, fruit juice drinks, added sugar and honey.

Limiting the sugar that can damage teeth

- Avoid sweet foods such as cakes, biscuits and confectionery between meals and at tea.
- Limit confectionery such as chocolate chips and hundreds and thousands and use only as part of cakes or desserts.
- Provide only fresh tap water and plain milk for children to drink.
- Choose fruit canned in juice, without added sugar or syrup.
- Provide dried fruit at meal times only, as chewing dried fruit releases sugar which can stick to children's teeth and lead to tooth decay.
- Choose breakfast cereals with the lowest sugar content. Choose those which are labelled as 'low' (green) or 'medium' (amber) in sugar. Avoid cereals labelled as 'high' (red) in sugar such as sugar-coated or chocolate-flavoured cereals.
- To sweeten meals, use foods that are naturally sweet like fruit, carrots and sweetcorn.

Artificial sweeteners

Food and drinks labelled as 'low sugar', 'reduced sugar', 'sugar free', 'no added sugar' or 'low fat' are often sweetened using artificial sweeteners.

Examples of artificial sweeteners include:

- aspartame (E951)
- saccharin (E954)
- sorbitol (E420)
- acesulfame K (E950)
- sucralose (E955).

Settings may wish to avoid artificial sweeteners as they may encourage children to prefer very sweet foods.

The use of artificial sweeteners is prohibited in any foods specially prepared for infants (under the age of 12 months) and young children (aged one to three years). The sale of such products containing sweeteners is also prohibited.[32]

Food and drinks containing artificial sweeteners can include:

- fruit juice drinks and squash
- yoghurt and fromage frais
- baked beans
- sauces and dressings
- flavoured crisps and other savoury snacks.

To find out if a product contains artificial sweeteners, read the ingredient list on the label.

Food and drink guidelines

Good practice

REMEMBER

- Eating sugary food and drinks too often can lead to tooth decay.
- Avoid sweet foods such as cakes, biscuits and confectionery between meals and at tea, and limit them at lunch.
- Provide dried fruit at meal times only.
- Offer only tap water or plain milk as drinks.

How to read food labels

- To help provide food lower in salt, saturated fat and sugars, it is recommended that settings cook from scratch as much as possible. When bought-in products are used, check the ingredients list and nutrition information to choose products lower in saturated fat, sugar and salt.
- Nutrition labels are often displayed as a panel or grid on the packaging, but may sometimes appear simply as text.
- Information on the back or side of the packaging gives the energy content (in kJ and kcal), plus amounts of fat, saturates, carbohydrate, sugars, fibre, protein and salt.
- Nutrition information is normally given per 100 grams (100g) of the product, and sometimes per portion (such as 'one slice').
- Remember that the portion size given on the product label may not be appropriate for young children. The portion size will affect how much fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt a child will consume.

How do I know if a food is high in fat, saturated fat, sugar or salt?

- The Department of Health[33] has produced guidelines to help all of us compare the fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt content of food. Try to choose products which are labelled as low (green) or medium (amber) in saturated fat, sugar and low in salt, and limit those that are labelled as high (red).

The Old School House Nursery has found that reading labels is very useful as it acts as a reminder about what you need to be looking for when buying products.

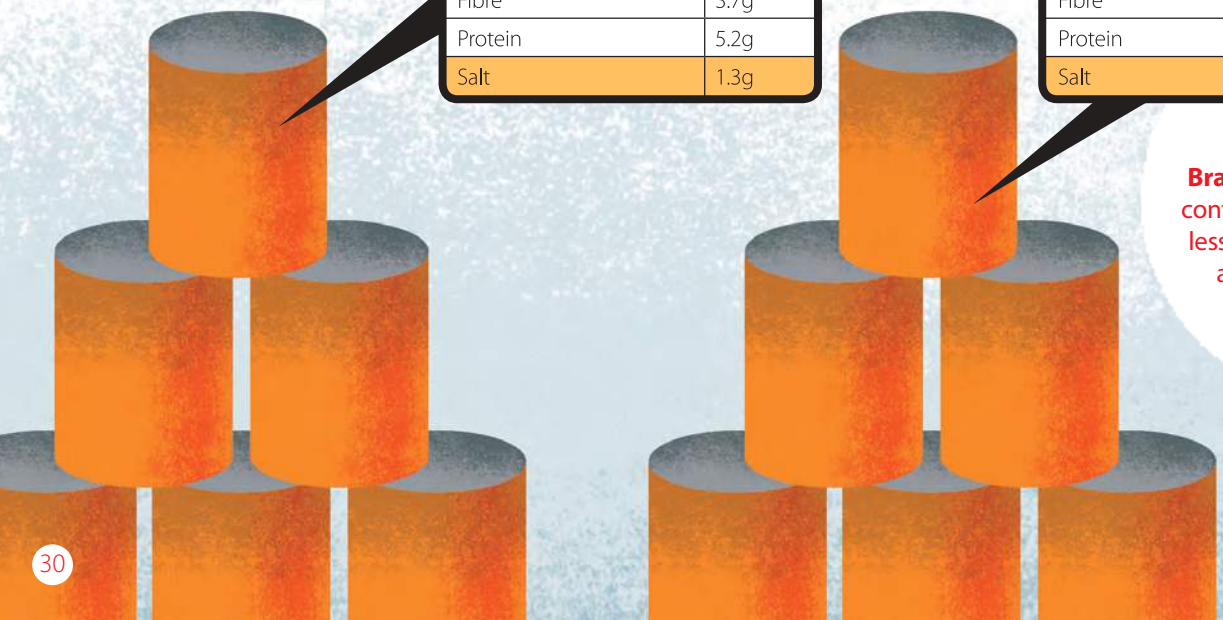
Guidelines for fat, saturated fat, salt and sugar per 100g

Nutrient	What is Low per 100g?	What is Medium per 100g?	What is High per 100g?
Fat	3.0g or less	3.0–17.5g	More than 17.5g
Saturated fat	1.5g or less	1.5–5.0g	More than 5.0g
Sugars	5.0g or less	5.0–22.5g	More than 22.5g
Salt	0.3g or less	0.3–1.5g	More than 1.5g

Using food labels to identify baked beans lower in salt and sugar

Baked beans – brand 1	
Nutritional information	
Typical values	**Per 100g**
Energy	355kJ 84 kcal
Fat	0.6g
of which saturates	0.1g
Carbohydrate	15.3g
of which sugars	5.9g
Fibre	3.7g
Protein	5.2g
Salt	1.3g

Baked beans – brand 2	
Nutritional information	
Typical values	**Per 100g**
Energy	311kJ 73 kcal
Fat	0.6g
of which saturates	0.1g
Carbohydrate	12.5g
of which sugars	2.8g
Fibre	3.8g
Protein	5.4g
Salt	0.8g



Brand 2 baked beans contain less sugar and less salt than brand 1, and are therefore a better choice than brand 1.

Iron and zinc

- Iron and zinc are needed for growth, healing wounds, and for a healthy immune system. Iron is also needed to make red blood cells, which carry oxygen around the body.
- Children aged one to four years require a lot of iron because they are growing quickly, and also need to build up their iron stores.
- One in four young children in the UK may be at risk of iron deficiency, which can have lasting effects on their health and development.[12] Iron deficiency in children may be linked to slower intellectual development and poor behaviour in the longer term.[13]
- All children who are vegetarian should be offered a wide range of meat alternatives, pulses and eggs to ensure they get all the iron and zinc they need. More information on vegetarian diets can be found on page 49. Examples of good vegetarian meal choices are included in the example menus in section 6 on pages 73-74.

The recipes for these meal choices can be found in HM Government (2017) Example menus for early years settings in England: Part 2 – Recipes.[34]

- To ensure that young children get enough iron and zinc, it is important that foods containing these nutrients are provided on your menu each day. Use the table below to help you identify good sources of iron and zinc to include as part of your breakfast, lunch, tea and snack menus.
- Iron from vegetables and cereals is not as easily absorbed into the body as iron from meat. However, providing foods containing vitamin C (such as green leafy vegetables and citrus fruits) with foods containing iron (such as cereal foods) may help to increase the amount of iron absorbed.
- Some drinks, such as tea and coffee, contain tannins which can interfere with a child's ability to absorb iron, so these drinks should not be provided.

Good sources of iron and zinc in each food group

Food groups	Iron	Zinc
Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates	Wholemeal bread Wholewheat pasta Brown rice Fortified breakfast cereals	Wholegrain and wheat germ breads Fortified breakfast cereals Plain popcorn
Fruit and vegetables	Dark green leafy vegetables e.g. broccoli, spinach, cabbage Dried apricots, raisins	Red kidney beans Green and red lentils Chickpeas
Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins	Red meat e.g. beef, lamb Canned oily fish e.g. sardines, pilchards Eggs Soya beans, tofu Pulses e.g. chick peas, lentils, baked beans	Lean meat, and dark poultry meat Canned oily fish e.g. salmon, sardines Eggs Tofu and Quorn™ Peanuts/ground nuts* Pulses e.g. beans and lentils Sesame seeds
Dairy and alternatives		Whole and semi-skimmed milk Other dairy products e.g. yoghurt Cheese

* Be allergy aware – information about food allergies and developing an allergy plan is available from **www.allergyuk.org**

Food and drink guidelines

Good practice

Food additives

Food and drinks contain additives for a number of reasons: to stop food changing colour or going rancid; as a thickener or a preservative; or to enhance the flavour or colour of a product.

Legally, manufacturers must state on the label if a product contains additives. These are listed either as the name or the 'E number', as in the examples listed below. Products developed specifically for infants and young children are not permitted to contain artificial sweeteners or colours.[32]

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) advises that the colours listed below may affect behaviour in some children, and that eliminating certain artificial colours from their diets might have some beneficial effects on their behaviour.[35] Where products contain any of the colours listed below, they are required to carry the warning '*may have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children*'. Some manufacturers have already removed these colours from their products

Colours to avoid

- Tartrazine (E102)
- Quinoline yellow (E104)
- Sunset yellow (E110)
- Carmoisine (E122)
- Ponceau 4R (E124)
- Allura red (E129)

The colours listed above are generally found in brightly coloured products. For example:

- confectionery such as fruit flavoured sweets
- cakes
- soft drinks such as squash and fruit juice drinks
- ice cream
- food colourings.

Ready-made meals and take-aways

Children should be able to get all the energy and nutrients they need from a balanced diet, containing foods that are readily available and easy to prepare from scratch.

- **Avoid off-the-shelf ready meals and snack foods** designed for young children, as these are often high in fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt. In addition, off-the-shelf ready meals designed for older children and adults should also not be given to children of this age.
- **Avoid take-away foods** as these are often high in salt, saturated fat and sugar.
- **Avoid functional foods** such as cholesterol-lowering or very high fibre products as these are designed for adults and should not be provided to young children.

Example of product packaging listing colours to avoid

Fortified foods

Fortification means adding extra nutrients to foods. By law, some foods have to be fortified in the UK. For example, white and brown flour are fortified with calcium, iron and B vitamins (thiamin and niacin) to replace the nutrients that are lost when flour is processed.[36]

In addition to those required by law, manufacturers can also choose to fortify other foods. Breakfast cereals are commonly fortified with nutrients such as iron and B vitamins. These cereals provide an important source of iron for young children, who have high requirements and commonly do not have enough iron in their diets.[12] Fortification is also important where children do not consume food or drinks which provide certain nutrients. For example, if children do not drink milk or eat dairy products, they may not have enough calcium in their diets. Fortifying soya products (such as soya drink)[§§], which some children may drink as an alternative, can help to ensure that they receive an adequate source of calcium.

It is important to note, however, that some products fortified with added ingredients and nutrients are designed for adults, and may contain amounts of particular nutrients which are too high for young children. This is why functional foods and fortified foods designed for adults should not be provided for young children.

Making sure, whenever possible, young children get the nutrients they need from the foods that contain them naturally can also help children to develop good eating habits. For example, the food and drink guidelines recommend including oily fish in menus at least once every three weeks, as these contain omega-3 fatty acids. Offering omega-3 fortified white fish instead will not encourage children to eat oily fish in the future.

Food and drink guidelines

Good practice

[§§] Be allergy aware: soya milk is not a suitable alternative for all children with an allergy or intolerance to cows' milk.

04

At a glance: Food and drink guidelines for each meal and snack

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Tea at a glance	42

This section lists the food and drink guidelines included in section 3, for each meal and snack. The 'At a glance' information can be used to check the food and drink guidelines are met for breakfast, lunch, tea and snacks provided in your setting.

It is important that the food and drink provided for children is balanced across each day.

The food and drink guidelines divide energy and nutritional requirements across meals and snacks provided during full day care in the following proportions:

- breakfast 20%
- mid-morning snack 10%
- lunch 30%
- mid-afternoon snack 10%
- tea 20%.

This leaves 10% for an additional drink or drink and snack at home in evening.

Balancing lunch and tea

Meals provided to children can vary between different early years settings, with some serving children a main meal at lunchtime and a light meal at teatime, and others providing a light meal at lunchtime and a main meal at teatime. The guidelines for main and light meals are the same, and the difference is the amount of energy provided; main meals provide about 30% of energy and light meals provide about 20% of energy. The amount of energy provided can be varied by the type and overall amounts of food provided at the meal.

The above proportions are based on the assumption that lunch is a main meal and tea is a light meal. Where settings provide tea as a main meal and lunch as a light meal, these proportions should be reversed.

For **main meals** (whether provided for lunch or tea) follow the guidelines for lunches on page 40.

For **light meals** (whether provided for lunch or tea) follow the guidelines for teas on page 42.

Breakfast at a glance

Menu planning advice

Breakfast is an important meal for young children. Settings should liaise with parents to make sure that children always eat breakfast, whether at home or when they arrive at the setting.

Food groups	Food and drink guidelines
Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates	✓ Provide a portion of starchy food as part of breakfast each day. ✓ Provide at least three different types of starchy food across breakfasts each week, for example cornflakes, wholegrain toast, porridge. ✓ Provide a variety of wholegrain and white starchy foods as part of breakfast each week. It is good practice to provide wholegrain starchy foods for at least one breakfast each week. ✓ Choose breakfast cereals with the lowest sugar content. Choose those which are labelled as 'low' (green) or 'medium' (amber) in sugar. Avoid cereals labelled as 'high' (red) in sugar such as sugar-coated or chocolate-flavoured cereals. ✓ Choose bread and bread products with a lower salt content. Choose those which are labelled as 'low' (green) or 'medium' (amber) in salt.
Fruit and vegetables	✓ Provide a portion of vegetables or fruit at breakfast each day.
Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins	Foods from this group provides a useful source of iron and zinc and can be provided as part of breakfast.
Dairy and alternatives	It is best practice to provide three portions of milk and dairy foods each day (including those provided at home); one of these can be provided as part of breakfast.
Drinks	✓ Children must have access to fresh drinking water. ✓ Provide only fresh tap water and plain milk for children to drink.

Examples of breakfasts meeting the food and drink guidelines using typical portion sizes for children aged one to four years.

Cornflakes (25g) with whole milk (100ml) and raisins (25g) with half a toasted crumpet (20g) and spread (4g) and a cup of water (100ml).

Porridge (100g) made with whole milk, and raisins (25g) with wholemeal toast (25g) and spread (4g) and a cup of water (100ml).

Wheat biscuits (25g) and whole milk (100ml) with half a toasted teacake (35g) and spread (4g) and mixed berries (40g) with a cup of water (100ml).

A hardboiled egg (50g) and wholemeal bread (25g) with spread (4g) with quarter of a pear (40g) and a cup of whole milk (100ml).

Rice crispies (25g) with whole milk (100ml) and dried apricots (25g) and half a banana (40g) with a cup of water (100ml).

For more examples of breakfasts meeting the food and drink guidelines, see HM Government (2017) Example menus for early years settings in England: Part 2 - Recipes.[34]

Mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks at a glance

Menu planning advice

Plan menus for snacks to ensure that they are varied across the week and that the food provision across the day is balanced.

- Avoid sweet foods such as cakes, biscuits and confectionery between meals.

Food groups	Food and drink guidelines
Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates	✓ Provide a starchy food such as crackers, breadsticks, rice cakes as part of at least one snack each day. ✓ Provide at least three different varieties of starchy food across snacks each week. ✓ Choose bread and bread products with a lower salt content. Choose those which are labelled as 'low' (green) or 'medium' (amber) in salt.
Fruit and vegetables	✓ Provide vegetables or fruit as part of some snacks. ✓ Provide a variety of vegetables or fruit across the day, and each week. ✓ Dried fruit should not be provided as part of snacks.
Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins	✓ Foods from this group provide a useful source of iron and zinc and can be provided as part of snacks once or twice each week.
Dairy and alternatives	It is best practice to provide three portions of milk and dairy foods each day (including those provided at home); one of these can be provided as part of snacks.
Drinks	✓ Children must have access to fresh drinking water. ✓ Provide only fresh tap water and plain milk for children to drink.

Examples of snacks meeting the food and drink guidelines using typical portion sizes for children aged one to four years

Sugar snap peas (40g) and houmous (40g) with a cup of water (100ml).

Peach (40g) and plain whole milk yoghurt (60g) with 2 rice cakes (16g) and a cup of water (100ml).

Tomato (40g) and full fat mozzarella cheese (17g) with breadsticks (7g) and a cup of whole milk (100ml).

Melon (40g) and half a toasted muffin (30g) with spread (4g) and a cup of water (100ml).

Banana (40g) and rice cakes (16g) with a cup of water (100ml).

For more examples of snacks meeting the food and drink guidelines, see HM Government (2017) Example menus for early years settings in England: Part 2 - Recipes.[34]

Lunch at a glance

For guidance about food and drinks brought in from home and packed lunches, see pages 52–53.

Menu planning advice

- Each lunch should include a main course and a dessert. Vary the desserts you offer with lunch each week. Provide a variety of different desserts each week (e.g. fruit-based such as apple crumble, dairy-based desserts such as rice pudding) and limit provision of cakes and biscuits.

Food groups	Food and drink guidelines
Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates	✓ Provide a portion of starchy food as part of each lunch. ✓ Provide at least three different starchy foods as part of lunches each week. ✓ Provide a variety of wholegrain and white starchy foods each week. ✓ It is good practice to provide wholegrain starchy foods for at least one lunch each week. ✓ Limit starchy foods which have been fried to once a week at lunch. ✓ Limit canned pasta in sauce. ✓ Avoid flavoured dried rice, pasta and noodle products e.g. packets and pots of instant flavoured noodles, pasta and rice.
Fruit and vegetables	✓ Provide a portion of vegetables and/or fruit as part of lunch each day. ✓ Provide a variety of vegetables and fruit across the week at lunchtime. ✓ Check product labels to choose canned vegetables and pulses without added salt and sugar, fruit canned in juice not syrup, and reduced salt and sugar baked beans. Baked beans can count as a vegetable only once during each week.
Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins	✓ Provide a portion of beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat (e.g. red meat or poultry) or other proteins (e.g. meat alternatives) as part of lunch each day. ✓ Provide a variety of foods from this group as part of lunch across the week. ✓ It is good practice to provide a portion each of beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat (e.g. red meat and poultry) or other proteins (e.g. meat alternatives) each week as part of lunch. ✓ Provide vegetarian children with a variety of protein sources such as pulses, eggs and meat alternatives each week as part of lunch. ✓ Provide one lunch for all children each week which uses pulses or a meat alternative as the protein source. ✓ Provide oily fish (such as salmon, sardines or pilchards) at least once every three weeks; this can be provided as part of lunch or tea. ✓ Limit the provision of meat products (e.g. sausages, meatballs), fish products (e.g. fish fingers, fish cakes), and products made from meat alternatives (e.g. vegetarian sausages), to once a week for each of the three types.
Dairy and alternatives	✓ It is best practice to provide three portions of milk and dairy foods each day (including those provided at home); one portion of milk or a dairy food and/or a milk-based pudding can be provided as part of lunch.
Drinks	✓ Children must have access to fresh drinking water. ✓ Provide only fresh tap water and plain milk for children to drink.

Example of lunches meeting the food and drink guidelines using typical portion sizes for children aged one to four years

Main course: Beef bolognaise (110g) with white spaghetti (90g).

Drink: Glass of water (100ml).

Dessert: Carrot cake (35g).

Drink: Glass of water (100ml).

Main course: Chickpea and vegetable curry (120g) with brown rice (90g).

Drink: Glass of water (100ml).

Dessert: Raspberry purée (40g) and fromage frais (60g).

Drink: Glass of water (100ml).

Main course: Salmon and broccoli pasta (200g) with sweetcorn (40g).

Drink: Glass of water (100ml).

Dessert: Apple and rhubarb crumble (60g) with custard (60g).

Drink: Glass of water (100ml).

For more examples of lunches meeting the food and drink guidelines, see HM Government (2017) Example menus for early years settings in England: Part 2 - Recipes.[34]

Tea at a glance

For guidance about food and drinks brought in from home and packed lunches, see pages 52–53.

Menu planning advice

- Each tea should include a main course and a dessert. Vary the desserts you offer with tea each week. For light meals (typically tea) provide fruit (such as seasonal fruit salad) and/or dairy-based desserts such as yoghurt, and avoid cakes and biscuits.

Food groups	Food and drink guidelines
Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates	✓ Provide a portion of starchy food as part of each tea. ✓ Provide at least three different starchy foods as part of teas each week. ✓ Provide a variety of wholegrain and white starchy foods each week. ✓ It is good practice to provide wholegrain starchy foods for at least one tea each week. ✓ Limit starchy foods which have been fried to once a week at tea. ✓ Limit canned pasta in sauce. ✓ Avoid flavoured dried rice, pasta and noodle products e.g. packets and pots of instant flavoured noodles, pasta and rice.
Fruit and vegetables	✓ Provide a portion of vegetables and/or fruit as part of tea each day. ✓ Provide a variety of vegetables and fruit across the week at teatime. ✓ Check product labels to choose canned vegetables and pulses without added salt and sugar, fruit canned in juice not syrup, and reduced salt and sugar baked beans. Baked beans can count as a vegetable only once during each week.
Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins	✓ Provide a portion of beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat (e.g. red meat or poultry) or other proteins (e.g. meat alternatives) as part of tea each day. ✓ Provide a variety of foods from this group as part of tea across the week. ✓ It is good practice to provide a portion each of beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat (e.g. red meat and poultry) or other proteins (e.g. meat alternatives) each week as part of tea. ✓ Provide vegetarian children with a variety of protein sources such as pulses, eggs and meat alternatives each week as part of tea. ✓ Provide one tea for all children each week which uses pulses or a meat alternative as the protein source. ✓ Provide oily fish (such as salmon, sardines or pilchards) at least once every three weeks; this can be provided as part of lunch or tea. ✓ Limit the provision of meat products (e.g. sausages, meatballs), fish products (e.g. fish fingers, fish cakes), and products made from meat alternatives (e.g. vegetarian sausages), to once a week for each of the three types.
Dairy and alternatives	✓ It is best practice to provide three portions of milk and dairy foods each day (including those provided at home); one of these can be provided as part of tea.
Drinks	✓ Children must have access to fresh drinking water. ✓ Provide only fresh tap water and plain milk for children to drink.

Example of teas meeting the food and drink guidelines using typical portion sizes for children aged one to four years.

Main course: Chicken and vegetable couscous salad (150g).

Drink: Glass of water (100ml).

Dessert: Rice pudding (75g) with sultanas (25g).

Drink: Glass of water (100ml).

Main course: Savoury omelette (70g) with potato salad (90g) and cucumber sticks (40g).

Drink: Glass of water (100ml).

Dessert: Stewed fruit (40g) with yoghurt (60g).

Drink: Glass of water (100ml).

Main course: Tuna and sweetcorn wholemeal pasta (150g) with red pepper sticks (40g).

Drink: Glass of water (100ml).

Dessert: Fruit platter (40g).

Drink: Glass of water (100ml).

For more examples of breakfasts meeting the food and drink guidelines, see HM Government (2017) Example menus for early years settings in England: Part 2 - Recipes.[34]

05

How to encourage children to eat well

Food plays a fundamental part in young children's lives while they are in early years settings, and eating should be a positive and enjoyable experience for them. This section includes a summary of good practice aimed at encouraging children to eat well. Topics covered in this section include:

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Developing a food policy and putting it into practice

A food policy enables you, your staff, parents, carers and children to understand your approach to food provision and learning about food. Developing a food policy is an effective way of making sure that the children you look after are receiving consistent messages about healthy eating.

When developing a food policy, it is important to consult all staff, parents, carers and children. Once in place, your policy should be shared and reviewed regularly (at least once a year), with staff, parents, carers and children.

The information included within food policies varies, but you could include information on your approach to:

- the food and drink you provide for meals, snacks and drinks
- communicating with children and families
- the eating environment and social aspects of meal times
- rewards, celebrations and special events and birthdays
- how you cater for cultural, religious and special dietary requirements, including managing allergies and intolerances
- how you manage fussy eating
- bringing food and drink from home
- learning about food
- cooking with children
- food safety and hygiene
- staff training
- sustainability
- promoting and supporting breastfeeding
- dental health.

You will find an example of a food policy on the Children's Food Trust early years website.[37]

More information can be found in Children's Food Trust (2015) Promoting and supporting healthy eating. A guide for early years settings in England.[38]

Communicating with children and families

Your approach to food offers an opportunity to encourage children and their families to eat well and to provide information and healthy food choices.

It is important that parents and carers are included in discussions around the food you provide. Here are some examples of how you can do this:

- provide information for parents and carers on the routine for meals and snacks in your setting, to help them plan their child's routine at home
- 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 in your setting
- display your menus for meals and snacks for parents and carers to see
- consult parents and carers about the food you provide, and ask them for feedback on menus as they are developed and introduced
- involve the cook/chef wherever possible when talking to parents about food
- encourage parents to attend events to celebrate special and cultural occasions
- include children when planning menus and activities involving food, and when talking to families about food.

"We have a holistic approach to food with our children and we have a mission to grow it, cook it, share it, eat it and enjoy it together".

The Children's House Nursery

The eating environment and social aspects of meal times

Meal times provide opportunities for children to learn about and try new foods, and to develop their social skills. Below are some points to consider when planning meal and snack times.

Timing of meals and snacks

- Young children have high energy and nutrient requirements, but only have small stomachs, so they need to eat little and often. Time your meals and snacks so that they can eat regularly – no more than three hours apart.
- Remember that children need to have three meals (breakfast, lunch and tea) and two or three snacks daily.
- Rolling snacks (where snacks are available for children to choose over an extended period of time) should be carefully organised and managed. If you are using rolling snacks ensure that children sit down at a table to eat their snacks, are supervised during these times, and are monitored to ensure they eat an appropriate amount of food safely to reduce the risk of choking. This will also help to ensure that children are encouraged to learn acceptable eating behaviours.
- Remember that children will eat at different speeds. Make sure they all have enough time to eat their meals and snacks, so that those who eat more slowly do not miss out, either on food or on play or other activities.
- Do not cut meal or snack times short to accommodate other activities – children may not eat well if they are distracted by more interesting things going on.

Meal times provide opportunities for children to learn about and try new foods, and to develop their social skills.

Regular drinking

- Children must have access to drinking water throughout the day and be encouraged to help themselves to water.
- Children need to drink regularly to replace the fluids they lose in energetic activities and play, and to make sure they do not become dehydrated.
- Dehydration can make children feel tired and irritable and affect their concentration. It can also make it difficult for them to go to the toilet and can lead to infections and serious health problems.
- Children must be able to use a toilet easily and have their nappies changed regularly so that they are comfortable.

Encourage children to sit around tables to eat their meals and snacks, as this will help to develop social skills and good eating habits.

The eating environment

- Children and staff should wash their hands before eating meals and snacks.
- Areas used for eating should be clean, warm and bright, and should be free from distractions such as television and toys.
- Using appropriately sized tables, chairs, plates, bowls, cups and cutlery will help children to eat independently, and you should expect that children will make mess when learning to use cutlery.
- Encourage children to drink from an open cup or free-flow cup (without a valve), so that they learn to sip rather than suck drinks, which is better for their teeth.
- Encourage children to choose the food they are going to eat for themselves, and to try new foods.
- Children should not be expected to finish everything on their plate, and should be able to eat their dessert, even if they have not finished their main course. If they are still hungry after their main course, they should have the opportunity to have second helpings.
- Food should not be used as a punishment, or as a reward.

Social interaction

- No child should be left alone while eating. Meal times should be sociable occasions and a valuable time to talk to children about food, so they are an integral part of children's education.
- Encourage children to sit around tables to eat their meals and snacks, as this will help to develop social skills and good eating habits.
- Children can be involved in helping to set up and clear away tables before and after meals. Encourage them to serve themselves or to take part in family service by collecting meals for other children sitting at their table.
- Wherever possible, sit with the children to eat your lunch, to act as a positive role model and encourage conversation. This will also help you to understand which meals are popular with the children, and to feedback to parents and carers about how well their child is eating.

Celebrations and special occasions

It is important that children are given the opportunity to celebrate special occasions and cultural events, and food and drink is often used to mark these occasions. However many foods and drinks served at celebrations can be high in saturated fat, sugar and salt, and therefore have limited nutritional value for young children.

When there are a lot of children in the same setting, there can be so many special occasions, such as birthdays, that children may be eating these foods very frequently. It is important to think about celebrating these events in different ways to reduce the amount of high fat, sugar and salt foods children eat at these times. You could mark special occasions with craft activities, songs and stories, dressing up, decorating rooms, playing special games or encouraging children to find out more about a wide range of events from a variety of cultures. You may also want to encourage parents to bring in healthier food or non-food items such as stickers instead of cakes or sweets for birthdays and other celebrations.

Including information on how birthdays and other special occasions are celebrated in your food policy will help to ensure that parents, staff and children understand the setting's approach to special occasions.

Providing food for all

Managing special dietary needs

A special diet is one which means a child cannot choose their foods freely. This might be due to an allergy, intolerance or medical need, or it might be associated with the child's ability to eat food, and requiring the consistency to be modified. If a child requires a special diet, talk to their family about how you can meet their dietary needs with the food provision in your setting. In some cases, you might also need to seek advice from a registered dietitian or a doctor.

All staff in your setting should be aware of children's individual dietary requirements. Whether they are based on cultural or religious beliefs, or if they are for medical reasons, children's choices, beliefs and safety must be respected and protected.

- Your setting should have a policy and procedure in place to make sure that this is done in an appropriate and sensitive way. Make sure this is easily accessible to all staff.
- Where children have special dietary needs (due to an allergy, intolerance, medical need or one that is associated with a special education need or disability) talk to their parents or carer, and health professionals where appropriate, to understand individual dietary needs and how these can be met.
- It is important that every child feels valued and included, and that they can have healthy food and drink choices appropriate for their needs.
- Children with special needs, including educational needs and disabilities, should be included in meal and snack times (unless otherwise indicated by their condition) with the other children in your setting.
- Children with complex needs may have additional requirements (such as having their food prepared as a particular texture to enable them to eat) or may need support to eat (such as specially designed cutlery) or need staff to feed them if they are unable to feed themselves.

For more information, see the Children's Food Trust factsheet on Catering for children with special dietary requirements - A guide for early years settings in England.[39]

All staff in your setting should be aware of children's individual dietary requirements. Children's choices, beliefs and safety must be respected and protected.

Food allergies and food intolerances

Food allergies affect an estimated five to eight percent of children in the UK.[40] The foods which most commonly cause an allergic reaction in children are eggs, milk, soya, wheat, gluten and peanuts.

A food allergy is an adverse immune response to specific proteins found in food, and even a tiny trace of a food can cause a reaction in someone who is allergic to it.

An allergic reaction to food can produce symptoms such as tingling in the mouth, skin rashes, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting, which can occur within seconds or minutes of coming into contact with the food. In the most extreme cases, swelling of the throat can occur. A life threatening allergic reaction is called anaphylaxis or an anaphylactic shock.

Food intolerances are not the same as food allergies. Food intolerances do not involve the immune system, and symptoms tend to occur more slowly than with food allergies, often hours after eating the food. Symptoms may also depend on the amount of the food that has been eaten, and some people may be able to eat small quantities of foods they are intolerant to.

If you suspect that a child has a food allergy, encourage parents or carers to seek advice and diagnosis from their doctor.

If a child has a food allergy (as confirmed by a doctor or registered dietitian) an allergy protocol needs to be in place which is accessible to all staff, so that everyone caring for the child is aware of their allergies and symptoms.

Early years settings are required to obtain information about children's special dietary requirements – including food allergies and intolerances – before they attend, and record and act on the information provided about children's dietary needs.[3]

Understanding which allergens are present in every meal and snack is an important step in providing food and drink which is safe for children with food allergies and intolerances. All food businesses in the UK (including early years settings) are now required to provide details about the allergens present in the food they provide. For more details, and tools to help provide this information, see the Food Standards Agency website[41] and the Children's Food Trust website for factsheet on Producing and sharing allergen information - A guide for early years settings in England.[42]

Vegetarian diets

Vegetarians do not eat meat, or meat products such as lard or stock. Vegetarian diets can be divided into three main types:

- **lacto-ovo vegetarians** eat both dairy products and eggs. This is the most common type of vegetarian diet
- **lacto-vegetarians** eat dairy products but not eggs
- **fish but no meat** some children eat fish and seafood, but do not eat meat or meat products. This is often known as pescetarianism. Most pescetarians maintain a lacto-ovo vegetarian diet with the addition of fish and shellfish and their products.
- **vegans** do not eat dairy products, eggs, or any other animal product, including honey. If children in your setting are following a vegan diet, seek specific advice from a dietitian. You may need to ask families to provide appropriate foods. For more information about vegan diets, please contact the Vegan Society.[43]

Vegetarian meals and snacks are suitable for all children. It is important that meals for vegetarian children are planned so that they have a wide range of foods to meet their nutritional needs.

- All lunches and teas provided for vegetarian children should include a portion of pulses, eggs and meat alternatives such as soya, tofu, textured protein or Quorn™, or nuts* to provide protein and minerals such as iron and zinc.
- Include a variety of different protein sources across each week for example pulses and beans two to three times, eggs and cheese, once or twice per week, and meat alternatives once or twice a week.
- To ensure that young children who are vegetarian have sufficient iron and zinc, provide meals and snacks containing good sources of these nutrients. Iron from plant sources is less well absorbed than iron from meat and fish, but there are many good vegetarian sources such as peas, beans, lentils, nuts*, soya products, wholegrain cereal foods, dried fruit, green leafy vegetables, and fortified breakfast cereals. Vitamin C helps to increase the amount of iron absorbed from vegetables and cereals. Make sure you provide vegetables and/or fruit with meals to help to increase the absorption of iron.

It is important that food provided for vegetarian children is of a similar appearance and texture to the food given to other children. Examples of good vegetarian meal choices are included in the example menus in section 6 on pages 73–76. The recipes for these meal choices can be found in HM Government (2017) Example menus for early years settings in England: Part 2 - Recipes.[34]

Cultural and religious diets

Many early years settings in England have a diverse population, with children attending from different ethnic and religious groups. You will need to consider the dietary needs of all of the children attending your setting, and talk to families to make sure you can cater for them wherever possible. Even if there are no children from minority ethnic or religious groups attending, it is still important to introduce all children to a variety of foods and so they can learn to appreciate the diets of different cultures.

Many of the meals and snacks that are suggested in this guide are suitable for all children. Using the guidelines will help you to provide healthy food for all children, regardless of their culture or religion.

Families and children from minority ethnic or religious communities may follow specific dietary habits and customs, and may exclude or prepare food in a particular way according to their religious or cultural beliefs. These will vary not only according to their religion, but also their culture and background. Families may need your support to make sure they have a varied diet that provides all the nutrients their children need.

When you are designing menus for children who are following cultural and religious diets, try to make sure that the food you provide looks as similar as possible to the dishes being served to other children. This will avoid identifying an individual child as 'different'.

The table on page 50 summarises some of the dietary practices that people of different religions may follow but is not a definitive list, and within each there may be some differences. Use this information to help you plan appropriate menus, but talk to families to make sure your menu is appropriate for their child.

The Children's House Nursery runs food-tasting sessions linked to different festivals during the year, for example Diwali, Chinese New Year or Tanabata.

* Be allergy aware – information about food allergies and developing an allergy plan is available from **www.allergyuk.org**

Food customs of different religious and cultural groups

Food		Jewish	Hindu*	Sikh*	Muslim	Buddhist	Rastafarian**
Eggs		No blood spots	It varies	It varies	Yes	It varies	It varies
Milk/yoghurt		Not with meat	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	It varies
Cheese		Not with meat	It varies	It varies	It varies	Yes	It varies
Chicken		Kosher only	It varies	It varies	Halal only	No	It varies
Mutton/lamb		Kosher only	It varies	It varies	Halal only	No	It varies
Beef/ beef products		Kosher only	No	No	Halal only	No	It varies
Pork/ pork products		No	No	Rarely	No	No	No
Fish		Fish with fins and scales only	Fish with fins and scales only	It varies	It varies	It varies	Yes
Shellfish		No	It varies	It varies	It varies	No	No
Butter/ghee		Kosher only	It varies	It varies	It varies	No	It varies
Lard		No	No	No	No	No	No
Cereal foods		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nuts/pulses		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fruit and vegetables		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

'It varies' means that some people within a religious group would find these foods acceptable.

* Strict Hindus and Sikhs will not eat eggs, meat, fish, and some fats.

** Some Rastafarians are vegan.

Source: Caroline Walker Trust (2006) Eating well for under 5s in child care.[44]

Encouraging fussy eaters to eat well

Young children can be fussy about what they eat, or how they eat. Fussy eating and fear of new foods (food neophobia) are part of development and affect between 10% and 20% of children under five.[45] Fear of new foods in children typically starts between 18 months and two years old and it is thought to be a natural behaviour. A child who appears to be fussy about their food but is growing well is probably eating a sufficient balance of foods and getting enough energy and nutrients. Severe selective eating is rare and generally starts from early feeding difficulties or significant health problems.

Simple strategies to manage fussy eating

Fussy eating and fear of new foods can both be helped using similar techniques. If a family is worried about their child's food intake, acknowledge their concerns and make a plan with them to encourage their child to eat well. It is important that the approach is consistent and essential that all those involved at mealtimes agree and follow the same strategies.

Modelling

- Seat fussy eaters with good eaters at mealtimes – this is very powerful and it has been shown that children will adopt the food preferences of their peers if they eat together regularly.
- Encourage staff to eat with children where possible, and talk enthusiastically about the taste and texture of the food both at meal times and at other opportunities.

Exposure

- Give children regular and repeated chances to taste new foods, as this increases their liking for and eating of new foods. The child must actually taste the food to change their preferences, and it can take as many as 10 to 15 tastings before they accept it.[46]
- If children are resistant to trying new foods, offer them small tastes and make sure the child maintains control of the situation. For example, you should give them the opportunity to spit out the food into a tissue if they really do not like it.

Rewards

- Praise children for trying new foods.
- Favourite foods should not be used as a reward to encourage children to eat foods they do not like. Foods used in this way simply become even more valued, and it is generally recommended that food should never be used as a reward or punishment. However, small stickers or other non-food items as rewards for trying food may increase a child's liking and consumption of food they say they do not like.

'Pressure to eat'

- Never force children to finish everything on their plate. Children who are made to eat everything they are served learn to dislike the foods they are pressured to eat, and these aversions may last into adulthood.
- Give children small servings at first, with the opportunity to have second helpings if they finish the first serving, as they may find larger portions off-putting.

Ashby Nursery uses small taster portions of different foods at snack time to encourage children to try new foods.

Food brought in from home

In your setting, children may be required to bring their own meals and/or snacks to eat. Alternatively, you may have some families who want to supply their own meals and snacks for their children.

Include guidance on food brought in from home within your food policy to help parents choose appropriate food and drinks for their children. This ensures that the food is safe for all children who may come into contact with it (including children with food allergies). Ensure that food and drink brought into your setting is appropriately labelled with the child's details, is safely stored until it is needed, and is reheated safely if appropriate. For more information about safe storage and preparation of food, refer to the Food Standards Agency's 'Safer food, better business.'[47]

If you also provide food and drink, encourage families to provide the same or similar healthy food choices as you will be offering, so that children have consistent messages about healthy eating and do not miss out on the benefits of sharing food and eating together.

If parents and carers ask for advice on lunches and snacks to provide for their children, recommend that the food provided is in line with the food and drink guidelines. For more information, refer to the Children's Food Trust's Healthy packed lunches for early years – A practical guide for parents and carers.[48]

Include guidance on food brought in from home within your food policy to help parents choose appropriate food and drinks for their children.

If parents and carers ask for advice on lunches and snacks to provide for their children, recommend that the food provided is in line with the food and drink guidelines.

Examples of food and drink to include by settings or parents as part of a packed lunch or tea:

Foods to provide	Examples of foods that could be provided
A portion of potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates (provide a variety of different starchy foods each week, including a wholegrain variety for lunch and tea once a week)	White or wholegrain bread, rolls, pitta bread or wraps. Chapattis. Plain naan bread. Bagels. Cooked pasta, rice, noodles, couscous or potato.
At least one portion of vegetables and/or fruit (provide a variety of different fruit and vegetables each week)	Carrot, cucumber, pepper or celery sticks. Lentils included in daal. Grated carrot in sandwiches or wraps. Fresh fruit such as sliced apple,*** banana, grapes, mixed chopped fruit or strawberries. Dried fruit such as raisins or apricots.
A portion of beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins (provide a variety of different foods each week)	Sliced meat, poultry or fish in sandwiches, rolls or wraps, or by itself. Sliced egg in sandwiches, rolls or wraps. Meat alternatives such as tofu in salads. Pulses such as kidney beans, chickpeas, lentils, as part of bean salads. Nut butter in sandwiches.*
A portion of dairy or an alternative (can be included as part of lunch and/or tea)	A pot of yoghurt or fromage frais. Cheese in sandwiches or wraps. Whole milk (for children aged one to two) or semi-skimmed (for children two and over) to drink.
Desserts, cakes, biscuits and crisps	Desserts made with cereals, milk or fruit. Avoid salty snacks such as crisps. Limit confectionery such as chocolate chips or hundreds and thousands, and use only as part of cakes or desserts. Limit provision of cakes and biscuits.
A drink	Whole milk (for children aged one to two) or semi-skimmed (for children aged two and over). Water.

*** If apples are sliced before being included in packed lunches, rinsing the slices in dilute lemon juice will stop them from turning brown.

* Be allergy aware – information about food allergies and developing an allergy plan is available from **www.allergyuk.org**

Examples of food and drink to provide for snacks by settings or parents:

Foods to provide	Examples of foods that could be provided
Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates (provide a starchy food as part of at least one snack each day)	Breadsticks, crackers, oatcakes, rice cakes, small pitta, bread or bread roll.
Fruit and vegetables (provide as part of some snacks)	Vegetable sticks – carrot, cucumber. Fresh sliced fruit – apples, bananas, grapes.
Dairy and alternatives (can be provided as part of snacks)	Cubes of cheese. Plain yoghurt or fromage frais. Whole milk (for children aged one to two) or semi-skimmed (for children aged two and over).
Cakes, biscuits, sweet foods and crisps	Sweet foods like cakes, biscuits, sweets and dried fruit should not be given as snacks as these can cause tooth decay. Instead provide starchy foods and fruit or vegetables. Avoid salty snacks such as crisps.
A drink	Provide milk or water. Do not provide squash, fruit juice or fizzy drinks, as these can lead to tooth decay.

Learning about and through food

Learning about food should be integrated into your educational programme. The examples given below illustrate how learning about and through food can be linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum.[3]

- **Personal, social and emotional development**.Meal times offer children experiences to taste different foods, overcome dislikes and learn how to share. Cooking activities offer opportunities for learning through working with others and increasing self-esteem.
- **Physical development**. Fine and gross motor skills can be developed through activities such as gardening, using knives and forks, preparing food, and washing up. Mealtimes can be used to help children to make healthy food choices.
- **Literacy**. Many stories involve food. Use these to teach about ingredients, where food comes from and about food for special occasions and from different cultures. Language can be developed and senses explored through discussing and describing the taste, texture, size, look and smell of food.
- **Mathematics**. Activities such as counting out spoons and pieces of fruit when setting the table or at snack time can be used to support numeracy skills. Sorting and matching foods into different types can help promote organisational skills and reasoning.
- **Communication and language**. Sitting around a table eating food together is a good way to teach conversation and social skills such as looking after neighbours.
- **Understanding the world**.
  - food tasting activities teach children about ingredients, the seasons and where food comes from including food from different cultures
  - growing fruit and vegetables teaches children about where food comes from, about life cycles, about gardening and how to look after plants. It is also a good form of physical activity. If there is limited growing space, many vegetables and herbs can be grown on window sills and in pots or bags. For more information, see Growing Schools[49] and the Royal Horticultural Society.[50]
- **Expressive arts and design**. Art activities can engage children with food and alert them to colours and shapes.

Childminder Sue Smith extends children's experience of food by visits to the local dairy farm, allotments, supermarkets and cafés.

Childminder Sheri Akambi involves children in her garden – if they help to grow and pick the fruit and vegetables, they are much more likely to try them.

Cooking with children

Cooking with children is both an enjoyable activity in its own right and an effective way of encouraging all children to try and eat a wide range of foods.

You do not need a kitchen or a highly experienced chef to run cooking activities, nor does it need to involve heating food. Many easy, tasty dishes can be prepared with limited equipment and ingredients. If you or your staff have limited experience of cooking with children, it is recommended to work with a small group (of two or three depending on age and ability) initially and choose a simple activity such as chopping soft fruit. It is best practice for you and your staff to undertake a basic food safety and hygiene certificate first.

Some key points to bear in mind when cooking with children are listed below. For more information, see the Let's Get Cooking website.[51]

- Recipes which involve mixing, combining and assembling activities such as dips, scones, muffins, layered fruit and yoghurt pots work well with young children.
- Choose soft fruit and vegetables (such as bananas, strawberries, melon, cucumber, mushrooms) and other ingredients. Cut them into sizes which are easy for small hands to hold.
- Several people can share the making of one dish. Make sure children all have a job to do.
- Use correct and safe peeling and chopping techniques and supervise their use.
- Plan carefully and make sure you have everything you need before you start. Check the recipe carefully and make a list of everything you need, including equipment. Avoid going into cupboards or leaving the room once you have started.
- Make your cooking sessions as safe as possible by having clear surfaces and removing hazards.
- Keep yourselves, your cooking area and your equipment as clean as possible.
- Before you start, tie back long hair, remove all jewellery, roll up long sleeves, wash hands thoroughly and put on an apron.
- Allow plenty of time and be ready for a mess! Expect to take twice as long as usual when cooking with children depending on how many are involved and how much supervision they need.
- Do not expect children to be able to do anything easily. They will need help to stir food, chop carefully and wash vegetables properly. Show them how to do it, be patient and enjoy watching their skills and confidence improve every time you cook.
- Enjoy cooking and preparing tasty food together.
- It is good practice to cook a range of different foods. Remember sweet foods such as cakes should only be eaten as part of lunch, or taken home to eat as part of a meal.

Childminder Julia Deakin involves children when preparing and cooking foods such as pizza topped bagels, which the children then eat as part of their tea.

Cooking with children is both an enjoyable activity in its own right and an effective way of encouraging all children to try and eat a wide range of foods.

Food safety and hygiene

Food should be stored, prepared and presented in a safe and hygienic environment. This is especially important when providing food for young children, as they may have a low resistance to food poisoning.

It is also important that children are taught basic hygiene themselves, such as not eating food that has fallen on the floor, and washing their hands with soap and water before eating meals or snacks and after going to the toilet or handling animals.

Food safety and hygiene regulations say that you must be able to show what you do to make sure the food you provide is safe to eat. The food hygiene requirements in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage state that "providers must be confident that those responsible for preparing and handling food are competent to do so. In group provision, all staff involved in preparing and handling food must receive training in food hygiene".[3]

Everyone involved in preparing food for young children, or helping them to eat, needs to understand the importance of food safety and hygiene, and be aware of the requirements of the Food Safety Act. Settings should register with the relevant local authority health department and contact them for further advice. For more information about safe storage and preparation of food, refer to the Food Standards Agency's 'Safer food, better business'[47] or the NHS choices food safety and home hygiene webpage.[52]

Sustainability

Food production, processing, transport, cooking and waste all impact on the environment. It is important to think about reducing the impact you have on the environment by shopping and cooking in as sustainable a way as possible for your setting.

Examples of ways you can do this include:

- reducing the amount of food you waste by buying and preparing only the amount of food you need
- choosing food that is grown locally and that is in season where possible. A British seasonal food chart to help you to identify foods in season is available from the Children's Food Trust website.[53]
- avoid buying fish rated as 'fish to avoid' by the Marine Conservation Society[54] and buy fish from sustainably managed stocks which is Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)[55] certified
- buying cooking oils that are not made from palm oil or choosing those which use palm oil from sustainable sources
- buying products with minimal packaging, recycling packaging and food waste. See Defra[56] for more information
- growing vegetables and herbs to use within menus.

More information for early years settings about providing sustainable food is available in 'Eating well sustainably - A Guide for Early Years Settings'.[57]

Protecting children's health – maintaining a healthy weight

Everyone working in early years settings has a responsibility to protect children's health. This includes helping children to maintain a healthy weight as they grow. Children who are gaining weight too rapidly or who are growing too slowly may need dietary advice from a health professional.

This aspect of dietary advice is not covered in this guide, but you should make sure that you are aware of the Healthy Weight care pathway[58] in your area. If you have any concerns about a child's eating behaviour, talk to their parents and health professionals such as health visitors, dietitians or registered nutritionists.

Providing food for infants aged six to 12 months

It is important that settings work closely with families to ensure the approach to food provision for infants is consistent at home and within the setting. Settings can support families by signposting to appropriate evidence-based advice where needed.

Most infants are developmentally ready for complementary feeding – the addition of solid foods alongside breastmilk (or first infant formula) – at around six months of age. After about six months of age additional foods are needed to complement the nutrients in breastmilk (or infant formula) and to introduce infants to a range of tastes and textures as they start their journey to healthy family foods.[59]

Offering a wide variety of different foods is important to ensure that sufficient energy and nutrients are included in the diet. Infants' first foods can include a range of foods from the different food groups, and can be provided blended, mashed and as a finger food.

Once food has been introduced, infants should continue to be given breastmilk or first infant formula, and shouldn't be given cows' milk as a drink until they are a year old (cows' milk can be used in cooking or in food from six months). For a summary of guidance on choosing first foods, and foods to avoid before six months of age see HM Government (2017) Example menus for early years settings in England: Part 1 – Guidance.[18]

Most infants are developmentally ready for complementary feeding, the addition of solid foods alongside breastmilk (or first infant formula), at around six months of age

The first aim of introducing solids is to familiarise infants with new tastes and textures and get them used to moving foods around their mouths and swallowing them.

At about six months

The first aim of introducing solids is to familiarise infants with new tastes and textures and get them used to moving foods around their mouths and swallowing them. At about six months many infants will be able to manage a range of blended and mashed foods as well as being able to hold food and feed themselves. Some infants need a little longer to get used to new textures, so may prefer blended foods on a spoon at first.

To help infants progress to a range of textures and tastes quickly, and encourage them to move lumps around their mouths and chew them, try to move on from blended to mashed foods as soon as infants can manage them.

Offer finger foods for infants to hold and feed themselves alongside any blended or mashed foods. From six months of age, infants can be encouraged to drink water from a cup (or beaker with a free-flowing valve).

Once food has been introduced, infants can gradually move towards eating three meals a day, including a mixture of soft finger foods, and mashed or chopped foods. Including food from each of the main food groups (fruit and vegetables, starchy foods, sources of protein and dairy foods) will provide the energy and nutrients which infants of this age need. Remember that infants and young children should never be left alone while eating, and should be closely supervised.

Around seven to nine months

By about seven to nine months, infants should be offered three meals a day (breakfast, lunch and tea), in addition to their breastmilk (or first infant formula) feeds. Infants of this age may have about four feeds a day, but should still be fed responsively to meet their individual needs. Breastfed infants will adapt their milk intake as their food intake increases; bottle fed infants will probably need about 600ml of milk a day at this age.

As infants become more confident eaters, food can be offered as mashed food with increasing texture and soft lumps. Providing finger foods as part of each meal helps to encourage infants to feed themselves, develop hand and eye co-ordination and learn to bite off, chew and swallow pieces of soft food.

Around 10 to 12 months

Infants aged 10 to 12 months should be offered three meals a day (breakfast, lunch and tea) in addition to their breastmilk (or first infant formula) feeds. Infants may have about three feeds a day at this age, with infants fed infant formula drinking about 400ml daily. Breastfed infants will adapt their milk consumption as their food intake changes. Lunches and teas can include a main course, and a fruit or dairy-based dessert, to move eating patterns closer to those of children over one year, and to ensure meals are sufficiently varied and nutrient dense.

Each meal should include a finger food to encourage infants to feed themselves, and infants of this age will be able to manage a wider range of textures in finger foods, including crunchier foods such as breadsticks and raw vegetables.

Food for infants aged 10 to 12 months can be minced or chopped, rather than mashed, and should include a wide range of different tastes and textures.

Encouraging infants to eat well

As well as helping ensure that children's nutritional needs are met, mealtimes provide an opportunity to support children to eat well and develop healthy eating habits for the future. Early years settings can play an important role in encouraging children to eat well, and supporting families to do so too, by providing information and reassurance.

Eating should be a sociable occasion, and mealtimes provide a good opportunity to include infants in family and setting routines. During mealtimes, ensure that infants are each given individual attention and interaction - make eye contact, and interact with and talk to infants while helping them to eat.

Mealtimes also help to develop infants' co-ordination and communication skills. Infants should be encouraged to explore, touch and try new foods. Giving infants finger foods to hold and feed themselves with, or a spoon to hold if being offered food on a spoon also helps encourage them to feed themselves.

How much infants eat depends on their appetite, so let infants guide you on how much food they need and never force them to eat. Look out for signs that infants might be full, such as turning their head away from the food or clamping their mouth shut. Allow plenty of time for eating, especially in the beginning and allow infants to eat at their own pace and stop eating when they are full.

Infants and children may not like new foods the first time they are offered, but after repeated tastes will learn to like new foods offered

regularly, so even if a baby spits out a food initially, offer it again at another meal. Remember it may take a number of attempts for a baby to accept a new food. More tips for families and settings are available on the Start4Life website[60], and from the HENRY programme website[61] and First Steps Nutrition Trust website.[62] Information on vitamin supplements for infants under 12 months is included on page 9.

Example menus for infants

A menu for infants in the early stages of eating solid foods (six to seven months) has not been included within this practical guide. This is because the main aims for this age group are to introduce them to a range of foods and flavours, and for them to get used to eating solid foods.

Providing food for infants aged six months

Foods from the example menu offered to older infants and children can be prepared for infants just starting to eat solid foods.

For example, by:

- Preparing cooked vegetables, cooked fruit and soft ripe fruit into blended, or slightly lumpy textures, or by offering them as finger foods that infants can pick up and feed themselves with.
- Preparing blended or mashed starchy foods and protein foods, or offering these as finger foods.
- Offering dairy foods such as plain whole milk yoghurt on a spoon.

For more detailed guidance on preparing foods for the initial stages of introducing solid foods, refer to 'Eating well: the first year' by First Steps Nutrition Trust.[62]

Providing finger foods as part of each meal helps to encourage infants to feed themselves, develop hand and eye co-ordination and learn to bite off, chew and swallow pieces of soft food.

Modified menus for infants aged seven to 12 months

Two example one-week menus for infants aged seven to 12 months are included in section six on pages 75-76. These menus show the type and amount of food that meets average energy and nutrient needs for infants of this age.

In order to help early years settings which provide food for children at a range of ages, these example menus are modified versions of the example menu for children aged one to four years on pages 73–74.

The example menus for infants aged seven to 12 months show how the example menus for one to four year olds can be modified to meet the needs of infants, following the meal pattern outlined in the table below.

However, it is important to remember that infants develop at different rates. Progression from the introduction of first foods (at about six months), to a range of blended or mashed foods, and then to a wider range of chopped or minced foods should be a gradual process. It should be based on each infant's developmental readiness, rather than being a staged process based on age alone.

Provision of additional courses at mealtimes to meet increased energy requirements from food (alongside a reduction in breastmilk/first infant formula feeds), should also be a gradual process as the infant progresses though the complementary feeding journey and the diet diversifies.

The table below shows a typical daily pattern of food and breastmilk/first infant formula intake for infants aged seven to nine months and 10 to 12 months.

Typical daily pattern of food and breastmilk/first infant formula for infants aged seven to nine months and 10 to 12 months

Meal	7 to 9 months	10 to 12 months
Breakfast	Breakfast (*blended or mashed with soft lumps depending on development*), served with a finger food.	Breakfast (*chopped or minced as needed*), served with a finger food.
Lunch	Main course (*blended or mashed with soft lumps depending on development*), served with a finger food.	Main course (*chopped or minced as needed*), served with a finger food. Dairy dessert/fruit course including finger food.
Tea	Main course (*blended or mashed with soft lumps depending on development*), served with a finger food.	Main course (*chopped or minced as needed*) served with a finger food. Dairy dessert/fruit course including finger food.
Breastmilk/first infant formula	Typically, four milk feeds daily (e.g. on waking, after lunch, after tea, before bed) totalling approximately 600ml/day for formula fed infants.	Typically, three milk feeds daily (e.g. after breakfast, after lunch, and before bed) totalling approximately 400ml/day for formula fed infants.*

* Breastfed infants should be fed responsively, and it is not necessary to monitor intakes of breastmilk.

Source: HM Government (2017) 'Example menus for early years settings in England: Part 1 - Guidance'.[18]

Example of typical food provision for infants aged seven to nine months and 10 to 12 months, and children one to four years

To help illustrate typical progression in food patterns, the differences in typical food provision for infants seven to nine and 10 to 12 months and then children aged one to four years for one day of the example menu is provided in the table below.

Meal	Infants 7 to 9 months	Infants 10 to 12 months	Children 1 to 4 years
Breakfast	Malt wheat cereal with whole milk (*mashed as needed*) and sticks of banana served as a finger food.	Malt wheat cereal with whole milk (*mashed as needed*) and sticks of banana served as a finger food.	Malt wheat cereal with whole or semi-skimmed milk and sliced banana. Crumpet and spread.
Mid-morning snack	Not provided (energy and nutrient needs met by main meals and breastmilk/first infant formula).	Not provided (energy and nutrient needs met by main meals and breastmilk/first infant formula).	Breadsticks and mixed vegetable sticks. Milk or water.
Lunch	Thai chicken or tofu curry and white rice (*blended/mashed with soft lumps*) and broccoli florets served as a finger food.	Thai chicken or tofu curry and white rice (*chopped or minced as needed*) and broccoli florets served as a finger food. Seasonal fruit slices served as a finger food.	Thai chicken or tofu curry, white rice and broccoli florets. Seasonal fruit salad.
Mid-afternoon snack	Not provided (energy and nutrient needs met by main meals and breastmilk/first infant formula).	Not provided (energy and nutrient needs met by main meals and breastmilk/first infant formula).	Cheese (sliced or cut into sticks) and sliced tomatoes. Milk or water.
Tea	Bean and tomato gnocchi bake (*blended/mashed with soft lumps*) with green beans served as a finger food.	Bean and tomato gnocchi bake (*chopped or minced as needed*) with green beans served as a finger food. Plain yoghurt, with sliced strawberries as a finger food.	Bean and tomato gnocchi bake with bread and spread. Strawberry frozen yoghurt.
Breastmilk/first infant formula	Typically, four breastmilk/first infant formula feeds per day (e.g. on waking, after lunch, after tea, before bed), but provided in line with individual routines.	Typically, three breastmilk/first infant formula feeds a day (e.g. after breakfast, after lunch, before bed), but provided in line with individual routines.	Provided in line with individual routines.
Fresh drinking water	To be available throughout the day, and offered as appropriate to all infants and children.		

Source: HM Government (2017) 'Example menus for early years settings in England: Part 1 - Guidance'.[18]

06

Practical tools and resources:

putting the guidelines into practice

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Evaluating and showing others your approach to food and drink provision

Early Years Code of Practice for Food and Drink: displaying the Early Years Code of Practice for Food and Drink is one of the best ways to show families, staff and visitors that your approach to food and drink follows the national best practice outlined in this guide.

The Code of Practice includes seven principles, including having a food policy in place, communicating with families, planning menus and providing meals and snacks that meet the voluntary food and drink guidelines, catering for all children, encouraging them to eat well, and ensuring staff are appropriately trained.

The Code of Practice checklist and Menu Planning checklist will help you to evaluate your current approach to food against the best practice outlined in this guide, and will help you to understand which guidelines you are currently meeting, and identify which guidelines you can plan to work towards achieving.

You can personalise the Code of Practice for Food and Drink for your setting by downloading an electronic copy from the Children's Food Trust website. This version allows you to insert the name of your setting and include photos of children who are currently attending your setting.

The Old School House Nursery found that the evaluation process brought everyone involved in food provision together and promoted a more consistent message about healthy eating.

Code of Practice Checklist: use this two-page checklist to evaluate your approach to food and drink provision.

This checklist will help you to consider your current approach to food and drink provision and verify if you are following best practice recommendations for each of the seven areas of the Code of Practice.

Read each recommendation, and complete the checklist by indicating whether you are currently meeting the recommendation, if you are planning to put the recommendation into place, or whether you have not yet met the recommendation.

Record any actions you need to take so your setting is working towards best practice recommendations.

You can print additional copies of this checklist from the Children's Food Trust website, so you can update it regularly to illustrate your progress. The completed checklist can be used as evidence for parents, for your quality improvement scheme and for external inspections such as Ofsted. In this way, you can demonstrate you have considered each principle in the Code of Practice, and are either meeting all principles or you have an action plan in place to work towards meeting each principle.

Childminder Donna Caddick found the checklist useful as she could see at a glance which guidelines were met.

Menu planning checklist: use this five-page checklist to plan and evaluate food and drink provision against the food and drink guidelines.

This checklist will help you to plan and evaluate whether your current food and drink provision follows the national voluntary food and drink guidelines. Evaluate your current menu by checking whether each meal (breakfast, lunch and tea) and snack you provide follows the food and drink guidelines.

Use the second part of this checklist to check that your overall food and drink provision is healthy, balanced and nutritious across the day and the menu cycle. This will help you to check that your provision is varied and you are choosing the appropriate types of food and drink in appropriate portion sizes.

You can print additional copies of the checklist from the Children's Food Trust website to plan and evaluate your food and drink provision each time a new menu is introduced.

Early Years Code of Practice for Food and Drink

has signed up to follow the Early Years Code of Practice for Healthy Food and Drink.

This means that this setting already meets, or is working towards meeting, the following principles:

I/We have a food policy in place to outline our/my approach to all aspects of food and nutrition.

This means that everyone involved with this setting knows what foods are on offer to children here, when and where they eat, and how we use food to support children's learning, health and development.

I/We consult with families and children and keep them informed about issues relating to food and drink.

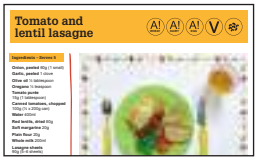
This means that I/we talk to families about issues such as timing of our meals and snacks, the types of food and drink I/we provide, and what their children eat. We encourage families to give us their views.

I/We plan varied menus for meals and snacks in advance, which include different tastes, colours and textures of food and take into consideration seasonality, sustainability and the impact on the environment.

This means that staff with appropriate skills plan menus so that all the children we look after are offered varied and balanced food and drink.

I/We provide meals and snacks that are planned so that they meet the national best practice food and drink guidelines.

This means that the meals and snacks I/we provide accord with the national voluntary food and drink guidelines for early years settings.



I/We cater for the dietary requirements of all children wherever possible.

This means that I/we work with families to make sure that any special dietary requirements (including food allergies and intolerances) are accommodated, and that children of all cultures and religions can enjoy appropriate meals and snacks.

I/We have a positive and welcoming eating environment, to encourage children to eat well, and develop good eating habits and social skills.

I/We use the whole day, as well as meals and snacks, to teach children about healthy eating and encourage a positive attitude towards mealtimes.

I/We have had training to make sure that we are able to provide children with appropriate food and drink for their needs and are effective role models.

This means that staff planning and preparing meals in this setting have had relevant training in food hygiene and they talk to children about food in a knowledgeable and enthusiastic way.

Signed ..... Date .....

Countersignature ..... Organisation .....

Code of Practice Checklist

Use this checklist to help you consider your current approach to food and drink provision and verify if you are following best practice recommendations for each of the seven areas of the Code of Practice. Read each recommendation, and complete the checklist to indicate whether you are currently meeting it. Record any actions you need to take so your setting is working towards best practice recommendations.

Name of setting:	**Date of completion:**	**Review due:**

Recommendation		**Do I/we meet this recommendation?**			**Actions to take**
		Yes	**Planning to**	**No**	
1.	**Developing a food policy** (You will find more information about developing a food policy on page 45 of the practical guide)				
1.1	I/We have a food policy in place which covers all aspects of our/my approach to food and healthy eating, and which is actively used and shared.				
1.2	I/We consulted with staff and families to develop the policy, and they are familiar with what it includes.				
1.3	I/We share and discuss our/my food policy with families when their children start attending our/my setting and it is clearly displayed.				
1.4	I/We review my/our food policy regularly (at least once a year) to monitor its progress and evaluate its impact.				
1.5	I/We use food to support other aspects of children's learning, and use food in activities with the children.				
2.	**Communication with children and families** (You will find more information about communication on page 45 of the practical guide)				
2.1	I/We have my/our menus for meals and snacks on display, and copies are available to families on request.				
2.2	I/We liaise with families about the timing of our meals and snacks and how these fit with routines at home. We/I inform families of what their children have eaten while they are with us.				
2.3	Families have the opportunity to give us/me feedback about the meals and snacks we/I offer.				
2.4	I/We listen to and work with children when we are planning menus.				
2.5	I/We encourage families to attend food events and we/I promote and support breastfeeding.				
3.	**Menu planning and food provision** (You will find more information to help you plan menus on page 11 of the practical guide)				
3.1	Meals and snacks are provided regularly for the children in our/my care (at intervals of no more than about three hours).				
3.2	My/Our menus for meals and snacks are planned in advance and are for periods of a week or more.				
3.3	New menus are introduced at least twice a year and seasonality is considered in my/our menus.				
3.4	Meals and snacks are varied to include a variety of tastes, colours and textures of foods.				

Code of Practice Checklist

Use this checklist to help you consider your current approach to food and drink provision and verify if you are following best practice recommendations for each of the seven areas of the Code of Practice. Read each recommendation, and complete the checklist to indicate whether you are currently meeting it. Record any actions you need to take so your setting is working towards best practice recommendations.

Name of setting:	Date of completion:	Review due:

Recommendation		Do I/we meet this recommendation?			Actions to take
		Yes	Planning to	No	
4.	**The food and drink guidelines** (You will find more information about the food and drink guidelines in section 3 of the practical guide)				
4.1	My/Our menus for meals and snacks are planned to meet the food and drink guidelines.				
5.	**Special dietary needs and diverse diets** (You will find more information about special dietary requirements on pages 48–50 of the practical guide)				
5.1	Children of all cultures and religions in our/my setting are able to have meals and snacks which meet their dietary needs.				
5.2	I/We meet the dietary needs of children who need special diets (due to an allergy, intolerance, medical need, special educational need or disability).				
6.	**Eating environment and social aspects of meals** (You will find more information about the eating environment on page 46 of the practical guide)				
6.1	The area where children eat in our/my setting is clean, warm and bright, and we/I have furniture, plates and cutlery suitable for young children.				
6.2	Children are involved in preparing and cooking or serving foods where appropriate. They help to set the table and to tidy up after meals and snack times.				
6.3	I/We encourage children to be independent, making their own food choices, trying new foods.				
6.4	I/We use meal and snack times as an opportunity to talk to children about healthy eating, to act as positive role models and to help children to develop good eating habits and social skills.				
6.5	I/We give children enough time to finish their meals and snacks.				
6.6	I/We have an agreed approach to manage fussy eating at mealtimes.				
6.7	I/We make sure that food and drinks brought from home are appropriately labelled and stored.				
7.	**Training** (You will find more information about food safety training on page 55 of the practical guide)				
7.1	I/We have had training in food safety and hygiene, and where appropriate, basic nutrition to ensure I/we can provide children with appropriate food and drink.				

Menu Planning Checklist for children aged one to four years

Use this checklist to compare your menus against the food and drink guidelines for each meal and snack. Indicate which guidelines have been met, and then record actions needed towards the guidelines not currently met. Complete this checklist each time a new menu cycle is introduced.

Name of setting:	**Date of completion:**	**Review due:**

Food and drink guidelines		**Has the food and drink guideline been met?**	
		Yes/No	**Action to take if guideline is not met**
Part 1: Use the first part of this checklist to evaluate food and drink provision for each meal and snack offered to children aged one to four years against the food and drink guidelines.			
Breakfast (for guidance on breakfast provision, see page 36 of the practical guide)			
1.1	Provide a portion of starchy food as part of breakfast each day.		
1.2	Provide at least three different types of starchy food across breakfasts each week, for example cornflakes, wholegrain toast, porridge.		
1.3	Provide a variety of wholegrain and white starchy foods each week. It is good practice to provide wholegrain varieties at least once a week at breakfast.		
1.4	Choose breakfast cereals with the lowest sugar content. Choose those which are labelled as 'low' (green) or 'medium' (amber) in sugar. Avoid cereals labelled as 'high' (red) in sugar such as sugar-coated or chocolate-flavoured cereals.		
1.5	Provide a portion of vegetables or fruit as part of breakfast each day.		
1.6	Provide only fresh tap water and plain milk for children to drink.		
1.7	Ensure children have access to fresh drinking water.		
Morning and afternoon snacks (for guidance on snack provision, see page 38 of the practical guide)			
2.1	Provide a starchy food such as crackers, breadsticks, rice cakes as part of at least one snack each day.		
2.2	Provide at least three different varieties of starchy food across snacks each week.		
2.3	Provide vegetables or fruit as part of some snacks and provide a variety across the week.		
2.4	Dried fruit should not be provided as part of snacks.		
2.5	Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat (e.g. red meat or poultry) or other proteins (e.g. meat alternatives) can be provided as part of snacks once or twice each week.		
2.6	Provide only fresh tap water and plain milk for children to drink. Ensure children have access to fresh drinking water		
2.7	Avoid sweet foods such as cakes, biscuits and confectionery between meals.		

Menu Planning Checklist for children aged one to four years

Name of setting:	Date of completion:	Review due:

	Food and drink guidelines	Has the food and drink guideline been met?	
		Yes/No	Action to take if guideline is not met
Lunch (for guidance on lunch provision, see pages 40–41 of the practical guide)			
3.1	Each lunch should include a main course and a dessert. Vary the desserts you offer with lunch each week (e.g. fruit-based such as apple crumble, dairy-based desserts such as rice pudding) and limit provision of cakes and biscuits.		
3.2	Provide a portion of starchy food as part of lunch each day.		
3.3	Provide at least three different starchy foods as part of lunches each week.		
3.4	Provide a variety of wholegrain and white starchy foods each week: it is good practice to provide wholegrain varieties at least once a week at lunch.		
3.5	Limit starchy foods which have been fried, to once a week at lunch.		
3.6	Provide at least one portion of vegetables and/or fruit as part of lunch every day and provide a variety across the week.		
3.7	Provide a portion of beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat (e.g. red meat or poultry) or other proteins (e.g. meat alternatives) as part of lunch each day.		
3.8	Provide a variety of meat, fish and meat alternatives as part of lunch across the week.		
3.9	Provide one lunch for all children each week which uses a pulses or meat alternatives as the protein source.		
3.10	Provide oily fish (such as salmon, sardines or pilchards) at least once every three weeks; this can be provided as part of lunch or tea.		
3.11	Provide only fresh tap water and plain milk for children to drink.		
3.12	Ensure children have access to fresh drinking water.		

Menu Planning Checklist for children aged one to four years

Name of setting:	**Date of completion:**	**Review due:**

Food and drink guidelines		**Has the food and drink guideline been met?**	
		Yes/No	**Action to take if guideline is not met**
Tea (for guidance on tea provision, see pages 42–43 of the practical guide)			
4.1	Each tea should include a main course and a dessert. Vary the desserts you offer. For light meals (typically tea) provide fruit (such as seasonal fruit salad) and/or dairy-based desserts such as yoghurt, and avoid cakes and biscuits.		
4.2	Provide a portion of starchy food as part of tea each day.		
4.3	Provide at least three different starchy foods as part of tea each week.		
4.4	Provide a variety of wholegrain and white starchy foods each week: it is good practice to provide wholegrain varieties at least once a week at tea.		
4.5	Limit starchy foods which have been fried, to once a week at tea.		
4.6	Provide a portion of vegetables and/or fruit as part of tea every day and provide a variety across the week.		
4.7	Provide a portion of pulses, fish, eggs, meat (e.g. red meat or poultry) or other proteins (e.g. meat alternatives) as part of tea each day.		
4.8	Provide a variety of pulses, fish, eggs, meat (e.g. red meat or poultry) or other proteins (e.g. meat alternatives) as part of tea across the week.		
4.9	Provide one tea for all children each week which uses pulses or a meat alternative as the protein source.		
4.10	Provide oily fish (such as salmon, sardines or pilchards) at least once every three weeks; this can be provided as part of lunch or tea.		
4.11	Provide only fresh tap water and plain milk for children to drink.		
4.12	Ensure children have access to fresh drinking water.		

Menu Planning Checklist for children aged one to four years

Name of setting:	Date of completion:	Review due:

	Food and drink guidelines	Has the food and drink guideline been met? Yes/No	Action to take if guideline is not met
Part 2: Use the second part of this checklist to check that your food and drink provision is varied, and the types and amounts of food and drink provided are appropriate. The guidelines in part 2 apply to all meals and snacks.			
Portion sizes (for more information about portion sizes, please see section 3 of the practical guide)			
5.1	Check that portion sizes for meals and snacks are in line with the typical portion size information within the practical guide.		
Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates (for more information about starchy foods, see pages 16–17 of the practical guide)			
6.1	Provide at least three different varieties of starchy foods across each day.		
6.2	Choose bread and bread products with a lower salt content. Choose those which are labelled as 'low' (green) or 'medium' (amber) in salt.		
6.3	Limit canned pasta in sauce (such as spaghetti hoops).		
6.4	Avoid flavoured dried rice, pasta and noodle products e.g. packets and pots of instant flavoured noodles, pasta and rice.		
Fruit and vegetables (for more information about fruit and vegetables, see pages 18–19 of the practical guide)			
7.1	Children should have five portions of vegetables and fruit each day, including those provided at home.		
7.2	Provide a variety of vegetables and fruit. Aim to offer at least four different types during full day care, and two different types during sessional care.		
7.3	Provide dried fruit at meal times only.		
7.4	Choose canned vegetables and pulses with no added salt or sugar.		
7.5	Choose fruit canned in natural juice without sugar.		
7.6	Choose reduced salt and sugar baked beans and serve these as a vegetable only once each week.		
Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins (for more information, see pages 20–21 of the practical guide)			
8.1	Provide vegetarian children with two or three portions of pulses, eggs, and meat alternatives each day.		
8.2	Limit bought and homemade meat products to no more than once a week.		
8.3	Limit bought and homemade fish products to no more than once a week.		
8.4	Limit bought and homemade products made from meat alternatives to no more than once a week.		
8.5	Avoid shark, swordfish and marlin, raw shellfish, raw or partially cooked eggs and whole nuts.		
Dairy and alternatives (for more information about milk and dairy food, see pages 22–23 of the practical guide)			
9.1	It is best practice to provide three portions of milk and dairy foods each day, from meals, snacks and drinks, (including those provided at home).		
9.2	Provide whole milk for children from one year up to two years as their main drink.		

Menu Planning Checklist for children aged one to four years

Name of setting:	**Date of completion:**	**Review due:**

Food and drink guidelines		**Has the food and drink guideline been met?**	
		Yes/No	**Action to take if guideline is not met**
Dairy and alternatives – continued			
9.3	Provide full-fat yoghurts, fromage frais, cheese and cream cheese for children aged up to two years.		
9.4	Avoid skimmed milk and skimmed milk products.		
9.5	Choose yoghurts and fromage frais which are lower in sugar.		
9.6	Avoid ice cream and sweetened frozen yoghurt between meals. Ice cream can be served once a week with a fruit-based dessert as part of a meal.		
9.7	Avoid canned milks, sweetened milk drinks and sweetened milkshakes.		
9.8	Avoid unpasteurised milk, milk drinks and cheese, mould-ripened cheese, soft blue-veined cheese and rice milk drinks.		
Drinks (for more information about drinks, see page 26 of the practical guide)			
10.1	Children must have access to drinking water throughout the day.		
10.2	Provide only fresh tap water and plain milk for children to drink.		
10.3	Avoid fruit juice (even diluted fruit juice).		
10.4	Avoid fruit juice drinks, squash, fizzy drinks, energy drinks and flavoured water.		
10.5	Avoid tea, coffee, cola and other drinks containing caffeine or other stimulants.		
Reducing saturated fat, salt and sugar (for more information, see pages 27–29 of the practical guide)			
11.1	Limit use of pastry to once a week.		
11.2	Avoid salt when cooking, and do not provide salt for children to add to their food.		
11.3	Limit the use of ready made sauces, soups, stocks and gravy granules.		
11.4	Limit use of condiments such as ketchup.		
11.5	Avoid salty snacks such as crisps.		
11.6	Avoid sweet foods such as cakes, biscuits and confectionery between meals.		
11.7	Limit confectionery such as chocolate chips and use only as part of cakes or desserts.		
Other products to avoid (for more information, see pages 32–33 of the practical guide)			
12.1	Avoid food containing flavour enhancers (such as monosodium glutamate (MSG), and the artificial colours listed on page 32.		
12.2	Avoid ready meals, takeaways and functional foods, such as cholesterol-lowering products.		

The nutrient framework

The food and drink guidelines for early years settings in England outline how often, how much and which types of food and drink should be provided for children aged one to four years.

The food and drink guidelines are underpinned by a nutrient framework which includes energy and the nutrients protein, fat, carbohydrate, dietary fibre, free sugars, vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, zinc, calcium and sodium. Providing the types and amounts of food and drink outlined by the guidelines will ensure children receive appropriate amounts of energy and these nutrients.

The nutrient framework underpinning the food and drink guidelines was revised in 2016 to ensure it is in line with current government dietary recommendations for children aged one to four years. It was informed by an External Reference Group[63] and it is based upon current UK Dietary Reference Values (DRVs), specifying the amounts of energy and nutrients needed by different groups of people,[13, 64, 65] and the recommended target salt intake to be achieved by populations of infants and children as recommended by Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN).[31]

The example menus for early years settings in England published in 2017[18] also include menus adapted for infants aged seven to 12 months, which used DRVs for infants of this age.[13]

The nutrient framework divides energy requirements across meals and snacks provided during full day care in the following proportions, leaving 10% for an additional drink/snack at home:

- breakfast 20%
- mid-morning snack 10%
- lunch 30%
- mid-afternoon snack 10%
- tea 20%.

The above proportions are based on the assumption that lunch is a main meal (providing about 30% of energy) and tea is a light meal (providing about 20% of energy). Where settings provide tea as a main meal and lunch as a light meal, these proportions should be reversed.

Table 1 summarises the proportions of daily energy and nutrient requirements that should be provided by each meal and snack for children aged one to four years[‡‡‡] over a one week period.

Table 2 summarises how these proportions translate into standards for food for children aged from one to four years of age who are in childcare.

[‡‡‡] This guidance has been written to ensure the nutritional requirements of children aged from one up to four years are met. These requirements have been derived from the Dietary Reference Values (DRVs) for children aged one to four years. This includes children up to their fifth birthday.

Table 1: The approximate proportion of energy and nutrients that should be provided by each meal and snack for children aged one to four years over a one week period.

Nutrient	Dietary Reference Value	Full daycare§§§ Breakfast, 2 snacks, lunch and tea	Morning session: Snack and lunch	Afternoon session: Snack and tea	Snack only	Lunch only	Tea only
Energy	% of the EAR	90% of EAR	40% of EAR	30% of EAR	10% of EAR	30% of EAR	20% of EAR
Fat	% of food energy	About 35%	About 35%	About 35%	About 35%	About 35%	About 35%
Total carbohydrate	% of food energy	About 50%	About 50%	About 50%	About 50%	About 50%	About 50%
Free sugars	% of food energy	Not more than 5%	Not more than 5%	Not more than 5%	Not more than 5%	Not more than 5%	Not more than 5%
Protein	% of the RNI	At least 90%	At least 40%	At least 30%	At least 10%	At least 30%	At least 20%
Iron	% of the RNI	At least 100%	At least 44%	At least 33%	At least 10%	At least 34%	At least 23%
Zinc	% of the RNI	At least 90%	At least 40%	At least 30%	At least 10%	At least 30%	At least 20%
Calcium	% of the RNI	At least 90%	At least 40%	At least 30%	At least 10%	At least 30%	At least 20%
Vitamin A	% of the RNI	At least 100%	At least 44%	At least 33%	At least 10%	At least 34%	At least 23%
Vitamin C	% of the RNI	At least 90%	At least 40%	At least 30%	At least 10%	At least 30%	At least 20%
Sodium	% of the SACN target average	Not more than 90%	Not more than 40%	Not more than 30%	Not more than 10%	Not more than 30%	Not more than 20%
Salt	% of the SACN target average	Not more than 90%	Not more than 40%	Not more than 30%	Not more than 10%	Not more than 30%	Not more than 20%

% of food energy = Percentage of calories consumed; **EAR** = Estimated average requirement; **RNI** = Reference nutrient intake; **SACN** = Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition.

Source: Adapted from Table 9, Children's Food Trust (2016) Developing new example menus for early years settings in England, to reflect current government dietary recommendations - Technical report.[63]

§§§ The remaining 10% of energy and other nutrients will come from drinks and snacks the child receives at home.

Table 2: Nutrient-based standards for children aged one to four years attending early years settings (updated 2016).[63]

Nutrient	Min/Max	Full daycare	Morning session: snack and lunch	Afternoon session: snack and tea	Snack only	Lunch only	Tea only
Energy (kcals)	Approx.	1108	492	369	123	369	246
Fat (g)	Approx.	43.1	19.2	14.4	4.8	14.4	9.6
Total carbohydrate (g)	Approx.	147.7	65.6	49.2	16.4	49.2	32.8
Dietary fibre (g)	Min	13.5	6.0	4.5	1.5	4.5	3.0
Free sugars (g)	Max	14.8	6.6	4.9	1.6	4.9	3.3
Protein (g)	Min	15.4	6.8	5.1	1.7	5.1	3.4
Iron (mg)	Min	6.9	3.0	2.3	0.7	2.3	1.6
Zinc (mg)	Min	5.2	2.3	1.7	0.6	1.7	1.2
Calcium (mg)	Min	360	160	120	40	120	80
Vitamin A (µg)	Min	400	176	132	40	136	92
Vitamin C (mg)	Min	27	12	9	3	9	6
Sodium (mg)	Max	900	400	300	100	300	200
Salt (g)	Max	2.25	1.00	0.75	0.25	0.75	0.50

Numbers have been rounded up or down where necessary, to ensure that figures for different periods of childcare add up appropriately.

Minimum means to provide at least the amount specified.

Maximum means to provide no more than the amount specified.

Nutrient-based standards for energy, fat and carbohydrate are calculated from Dietary Reference Values for energy published by SACN in 2011.[64] The standards for dietary fibre and free sugars are calculated from recommendations published by SACN in 2015.[65] The standards for protein, iron, zinc, calcium, vitamin A and vitamin C are calculated from Dietary Reference Values published by COMA in 1991.[13] The standard for sodium/salt is calculated from recommendations for population intakes published by SACN in 2003.[31]

Source: Adapted from Table 10 Children's Food Trust (2016) Developing new example menus for early years settings in England, to reflect current government dietary recommendations - Technical report. Available from The Children's Food Trust. [63]

Example one week spring/summer menu for one to four year olds meeting the food and drink guidelines

This spring/summer one week menu meets the food and drink guidelines and the energy and nutrient requirements for children aged one to four years based on greatest need. The whole three-week spring/summer menu and recipes are available from HM Government (2017) Example menus for early years settings in England: Part 2 - Recipes.[34]

Meal	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast Planned to provide 20% of a child's daily nutritional requirements Drinks: Water only	Malt wheat cereal with milk and sliced banana Crumpet and spread	Cornflakes with milk, raisins and kiwi fruit quarters White toast and spread	Hard-boiled egg and tomatoes with wholemeal bread and spread Banana	Wheat bisks with milk and mixed berries Half a slice of fruit bread and spread	Crisped rice cereal and milk Half a bagel with spread and melon
Mid-morning snack Planned to provide 10% of a child's daily nutritional requirements	Breadsticks and mixed vegetable sticks Milk or water	Toasted crumpet, spread and strawberries Milk or water	Yoghurt and sliced grapes Milk or water	Wholemeal toast with spread and mangetout Milk or water	Banana slices Milk or water
Lunch Planned to provide 30% of a child's daily nutritional requirements Drinks: Water only	Thai chicken curry (or Thai tofu curry) with white rice Seasonal fruit salad	Lamb moussaka (or lentil moussaka) with garlic bread and mixed salad Rhubarb fool	Pork ragu (or soya and apple ragu) with new potatoes, broad beans and courgettes Pineapple upside down pudding with custard	Salmon and pea risotto (or bean and pea risotto) Blueberry sponge cake	Bean and veggie sausage wholemeal pasta bake Plain Greek yoghurt with raspberry purée
Mid-afternoon snack Planned to provide 10% of a child's daily nutritional requirements	Cheese (sliced or cut into sticks) and sliced tomatoes Milk or water	Pineapple slices Milk or water	Mashed avocado and pitta bread Milk or water	Mixed chopped seasonal fruit Milk or water	Cucumber and carrot sticks with crackers and cream cheese Milk or water
Tea Planned to provide 20% of a child's daily nutritional requirements Drinks: Water only	Bean and tomato gnocchi bake with bread and spread Strawberry frozen yoghurt	Tuna fishcakes (or potato and lentil cakes) with tomato relish Seasonal fruit salad	Pasta with beans and peas Rice pudding with peach purée	Wholemeal English muffin pizza with various toppings Banana slices	Crustless quiche with potato salad and pepper sticks Apple slices and raisins
Fresh drinking water	To be available throughout the day, and offered as appropriate to all infants.				

The spring/summer menu has been developed to meet the revised nutrient framework and reflect current dietary recommendations based on greatest need using current UK Dietary Reference Values (DRVs), specifying the amounts of energy and nutrients needed by different groups of people,[13, 64, 65] and the recommended target salt intake to be achieved by populations of infants and children as recommended by Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN).[31]

Example one week autumn/winter menu for one to four year olds meeting the food and drink guidelines

This autumn/winter one week menu meets the food and drink guidelines and the energy and nutrient requirements for children aged one to four years based on greatest need. The whole three-week spring/summer menu and recipes are available from HM Government (2017) Example menus for early years settings in England: Part 2 - Recipes.[34]

Meal	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast Planned to provide 20% of a child's daily nutritional requirements Drinks: Water only	Wheat bisks with yoghurt and dried apricots White toast and spread	Cornflakes and milk Wholemeal toast, with spread, tomatoes and mushrooms	Porridge with raisins Banana	Malt wheat cereal and milk Crumpet with spread and pear	Crisped rice cereal and milk with satsumas Fruit toast and spread
Mid-morning snack Planned to provide 10% of a child's daily nutritional requirements	Toasted English muffin and spread with a clementine Milk or water	Runner beans with bean dip Milk or water	Rice cakes with beetroot dip Milk or water	Banana Milk or water	Toasted pitta bread with mashed avocado Milk or water
Lunch Planned to provide 30% of a child's daily nutritional requirements Drinks: Water only	Haddock and salmon pie (or bean pie) with red cabbage and runner beans Eve's pudding and custard	Lamb tagine (or mixed bean tagine) with vegetable couscous Warm winter fruit salad and vanilla sauce	Pork meatballs (or vegetarian meatballs) with spaghetti, peas and carrots Seasonal fruit salad	Chickpea and vegetable biryani Mandarin jelly	Roast chicken (or Quorn™ fillet) with roast potatoes, root vegetables and gravy Yoghurt and dates
Mid-afternoon snack Planned to provide 10% of a child's daily nutritional requirements	Tomato slices and cheese cut into sticks Milk or water	Plain popcorn with pear Milk or water	Oatcake and satsuma Milk or water	Baby corn, crackers and spread Milk or water	Carrot, pepper sticks and houmous Milk or water
Tea Planned to provide 20% of a child's daily nutritional requirements Drinks: Water only	Couscous with chicken (or houmous), beetroot and mixed salad Seasonal fruit salad	Tuna mayonnaise (or cheese) with a jacket potato and carrot and cucumber sticks Bananas and custard	Sweet potato and lentil soup with wholemeal bread and spread Yoghurt and blackberry compote	Pea, ham (or veggie mince) and mushroom pasta bake Rice pudding and apricots	Mexican bean and cheese wraps with red pepper and celery Apples, pears and plums
Fresh drinking water	To be available throughout the day, and offered as appropriate to all infants.				

The autumn/winter menu has been developed to meet the revised nutrient framework and reflect current dietary recommendations based on greatest need using current UK Dietary Reference Values (DRVs), specifying the amounts of energy and nutrients needed by different groups of people,[13, 64, 65] and the recommended target salt intake to be achieved by populations of infants and children as recommended by Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN).[31]

Example one week spring/summer menu for one to four year olds adapted for infants aged seven to 12 months

This example menu shows how meals for 1-4 year olds can be adapted for infants aged 7-12 months. For full guidance on introducing complementary foods for infants see the Start4Life website and resources.[19]

Spring/summer menu adapted for infants 7-12 months[2]

Meal	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast For all infants 7-12 months	Malt wheat cereal with whole milk and **sticks of banana***	Cornflakes with whole milk, chopped raisins and **kiwi fruit quarters***	Sliced or mashed hard-boiled egg and tomatoes with **wholemeal bread and spread***	Wheat bisks with milk and mixed berries **Fruit toast fingers***	Crisped rice cereal with whole milk and **melon slices***
Lunch **Main course** for all infants 7-12 months **Second course** for infants 10-12 months only	Thai chicken (or tofu) curry, white rice and **broccoli florets*** **Seasonal fruit slices***	Lamb (or lentil) moussaka with **carrot batons*** and **toast strips*** Custard with **banana sticks***	Pork (or soya) ragu with new potatoes, broad beans and **courgette batons*** **Pineapple slices*** and custard	Salmon (or bean) and pea risotto with **red pepper sticks*** Plain yoghurt with **blueberries***	Bean and veggie sausage wholemeal pasta bake with **broccoli florets*** Plain yoghurt with **raspberries***
Tea **Main course** for all infants 7-12 months **Second course** for infants 10-12 months only	Bean and tomato gnocchi bake with **green beans*** Plain yoghurt and **strawberries***	Tuna fishcakes (or lentil and potato cakes) with **vegetable sticks*** **Seasonal fruit slices*** with plain yoghurt	Pasta with beans and peas and **cooked carrot batons*** Rice pudding with **peach slices***	**Wholemeal English muffin pizza with cheese and vegetable topping*** **Banana slices***	Crustless quiche with potato salad and **pepper sticks*** **Apple slices and cheese (cut into sticks)***
Breastmilk/first infant formula	To be offered to infants according to their individual routines (as discussed with families). In addition to offering three meals a day, infants may typically have breastmilk or first infant formula feeds of: • **7-9 months:** four breastmilk/first infant formula feeds per day (e.g. on waking, after lunch, after tea, before bed) • **10-12 months:** three breastmilk/first infant formula feeds a day (e.g. after breakfast, after lunch, before bed).				
Fresh drinking water	To be available throughout the day, and offered as appropriate to all infants.				

* Indicates the part of each meal that can be held and eaten by infants as a finger food.

For further details, including modification in texture for infants aged 7-9 months and 10-12 months, and further adaptations required to each recipe for this age group, see HM Government (2016) 'Example menus for early years settings in England: Part 2 - Recipes'.[34]

Example one week autumn/winter menu for one to four year olds adapted for infants aged seven to 12 months

This example menu shows how meals for 1-4 year olds can be adapted for infants aged 7-12 months. For full guidance on introducing complementary foods for infants see the Start4Life website and resources.[19]

Meal	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast For all infants 7-12 months	Wheat bisk with whole milk, **chopped apricot and kiwi quarters***	**Wholemeal toast fingers*** and spread, with tomatoes and mushrooms	Porridge with chopped raisins and **sticks of banana***	Malt wheat cereal and whole milk with **pear sticks***	Crisped rice cereal and whole milk with **canned peach slices***
Lunch **Main course** for all infants 7-12 months	Haddock and salmon (or bean) pie with **runner beans***	Lamb (or mixed bean) tagine with vegetable couscous and **green beans***	Pork (or soya mince) meatballs in tomato sauce with pasta shapes, peas and **carrot batons***	Chickpea and vegetable biryani with **cauliflower florets***	Roast chicken (or veggie sausage) with roast potatoes and **root vegetables***
Second course for infants 10-12 months only	Stewed apple and custard with **sliced apple***	**Winter fruit slices*** with yoghurt	**Seasonal fruit slices***	**Sliced grapes and cheese (Edam) strips***	Yoghurt and chopped dates with **sticks of pear***
Tea **Main course** for all infants 7-12 months	Couscous with chicken (or houmous) and beetroot and **cucumber strips***	Jacket potato with tuna (or cheese), with **baby corn***	Sweet potato and lentil soup with **wholemeal bread and spread***	Pea, ham (or veggie mince) and mushroom pasta bake with **broccoli florets***	Toast fingers with mashed beans and cheese, with **cooked red pepper sticks***
Second course for infants 10-12 months only	**Seasonal fruit slices*** with plain yoghurt	**Bananas*** and custard	Yoghurt and blackberry compote with **canned pineapple***	Rice pudding with chopped dried apricots and **canned mandarin segments***	**Apple, pears and plums***
Breastmilk/first infant formula	To be offered to infants according to their individual routines (as discussed with families). In addition to offering three meals a day, infants may typically have breastmilk or first infant formula feeds of: • **7-9 months:** four breastmilk/first infant formula feeds per day (e.g. on waking, after lunch, after tea, before bed) • **10-12 months:** three breastmilk/first infant formula feeds a day (e.g. after breakfast, after lunch, before bed).				
Fresh drinking water	To be available throughout the day, and offered as appropriate to all infants.				

* Indicates the part of each meal that can be held and eaten by infants as a finger food.

For further details, including modification in texture for infants aged 7-9 months and 10-12 months, and further adaptations required to each recipe for this age group, see HM Government (2016) 'Example menus for early years settings in England: Part 2 - Recipes'.[34]

Sizes of plates and bowls

The food and drink guidelines include examples of typical portion sizes of different food and drink for children aged one to five years.*

The actual sizes of plates and bowls included in the food photos are displayed below to help you visualise them.

Small bowl: 8cm (80mm) actual size

Large bowl: 12cm (120mm) actual size

*Portion sizes are typical example portion sizes for children aged one to four years, and are not appropriate for children under one year of age.

Plate: 20cm (200mm) actual size

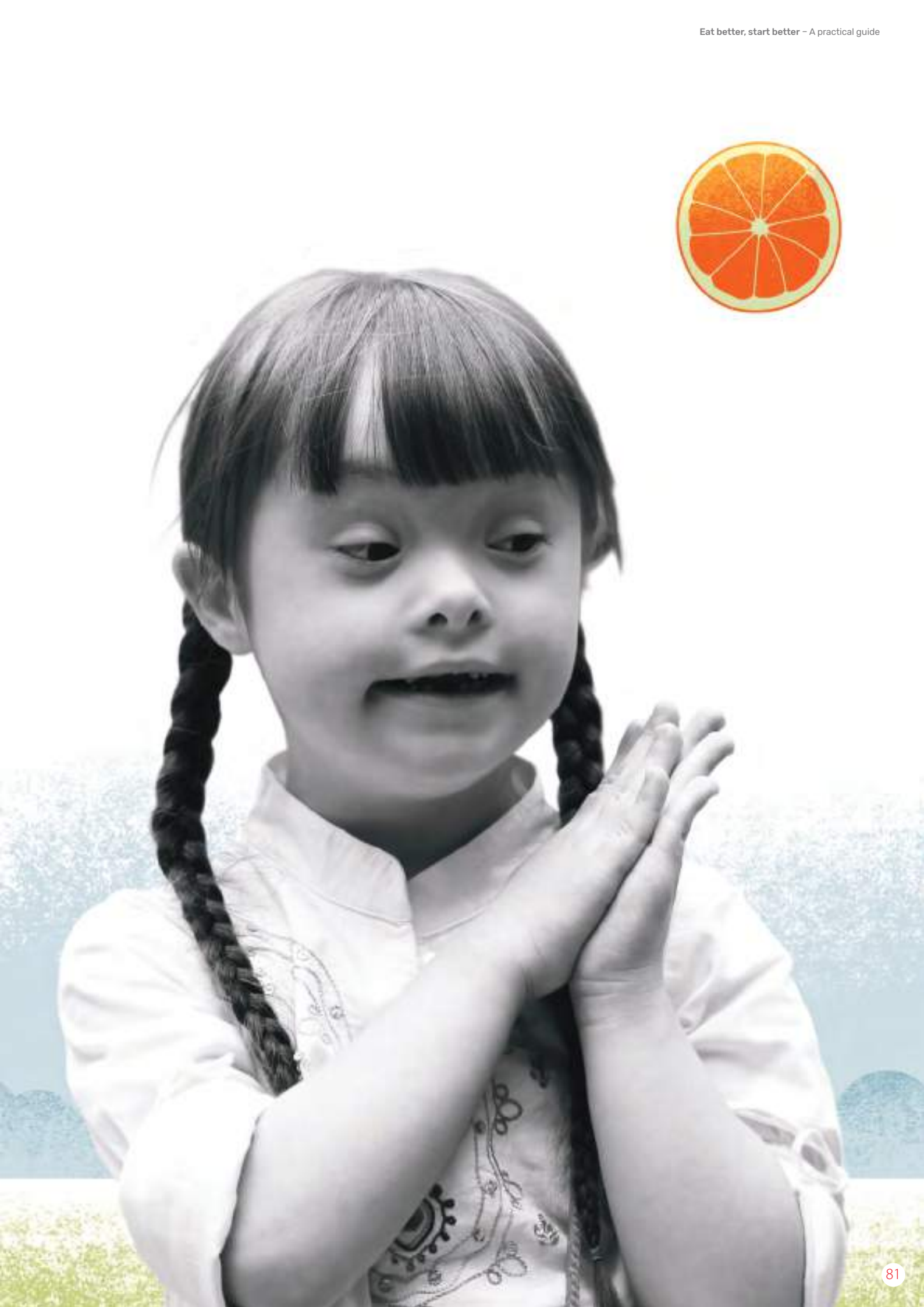
Glossary of terms used within this guidance document

Term	Meaning
Avoid	These foods and drinks should not be provided as part of meals or snacks.
Celebrations and special occasions	A party or celebration to mark a religious, cultural or fund-raising event.
Concentrated fruit juice	This is obtained from one or more kinds of fruit juice by the physical removal of a specific proportion of the water content of the juice. Where the product is intended for direct consumption, the proportion of water content removed must be at least 50%. This type of product is permitted to include other ingredients such as added sugar.
Confectionery	Chewing gum, cereal bars, processed fruit bars, non-chocolate confectionery such as sweets (whether or not containing sugar), chocolate, products containing or coated with chocolate and any chocolate-flavoured substance.
Deep-fried food	Food which has been deep-fried in the kitchen or flash-fried during the manufacturing process. Examples include chips and some other potato products, some crumbed or battered chicken or fish products, spring rolls and doughnuts.
Dietary Reference Value (DRV)	Benchmark intakes of energy and nutrients. They indicate the amount of energy or individual nutrients needed by a group of people of a certain age range (and sometimes gender) for good health.
Food allergy	An adverse immune response to specific proteins found in food.
Estimated Average Requirement (EAR)	The average amount of energy or nutrients needed by a group of people. Half the population will have needs greater than this amount and half will have needs below this amount.
Fortification	Adding extra nutrients to food.
Fruit juice	100% pure juice made from the flesh of fresh fruit or from concentrates, and contains no flavourings, colours, preservatives or any other added ingredients.Includes products described as 'fruit juice' or 'fruit juice from concentrate' as described in Schedule 2 of the Fruit Juices and Fruit Nectars (England) Regulations 2013.
Fruit juice from concentrate	Fruit juice from concentrate means that the fruit has been picked, squeezed and concentrated (by evaporating the water naturally present in the juice) in the country of origin. The concentrated juice is then frozen and shipped to the country of use for packing. Fruit juice packers then reconstitute the juice restoring it to its original strength by adding the same amount of water to meet the standards set down in the EU Directive 2009/106/EC. Fruit juice from concentrate is a similar product to fruit juice.
Halal	Meat slaughtered or prepared in the manner prescribed by Islamic law.
Lower fat milk	Means milk where the fat content has been reduced to not more than 1.8%.

Term	Meaning
Kosher	Food in accordance with Jewish dietary laws.
Limit	These food and drinks should be provided no more than once a week.
Meat	Skeletal muscle of mammals including cows, sheep, lamb, pigs, goats, rabbits and bird species such as chickens, turkeys, geese and ducks. These must be recognised as fit for human consumption – as defined by Directive 2000/13/EC of the European Parliament and the Council on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the labelling, presentation and advertising of foodstuffs.††††
Meat alternatives	A product suitable for vegetarians, and used in place of meat. Includes soya bean products, (such as soya mince, tofu), textured vegetable protein and Quorn™.
Meat product	Sausages, burgers, nuggets, sausage rolls, individual meat pies and canned meat, whether bought or homemade.
Menu cycle	A plan of menus outlining food and drinks to be served as part of meals and snacks across the week or period of weeks.
Nutrient framework	The proportion of energy and nutrients that each meal and snacks should provide for children aged one to four years in early years settings.
Oily fish	Anchovies, herring, kipper, mackerel, pilchards, salmon, sardines, trout, tuna (but not canned tuna) and whitebait.
Portion/serving	An amount of a particular food provided to each child as part of a meal.
Reference Nutrient Intake (RNI)	The amount of a nutrient which is enough to meet the dietary requirements of about 97% of a specific group of people.
Rolling snack	Where snacks are available, and children can select food, over an extended period of time.
Saturated fat	Fat which comes mainly from animal sources; a diet high in saturated fat can cause high cholesterol levels and increase the risk of diseases such as coronary heart disease, diabetes and some cancers.
Sweetened milkshakes or syrups	Flavoured milkshakes that have been bought or made up at home with flavoured powders or syrups.
Unsaturated fat	Type of fat found in nuts, vegetable oils, canola oil, olive oil, high oleic safflower oil, sunflower oil, avocado.
Week	The five days from Monday to Friday.

**** SI 2013/2775 The Fruit Juices and Fruit Nectars (England) Regulations 2013.

†††† OJ No. L 109 6.5.2000, p29; as amended by Commission Directive 2001/101/EC (OJ No. L310, 28.11.2001, p.19).



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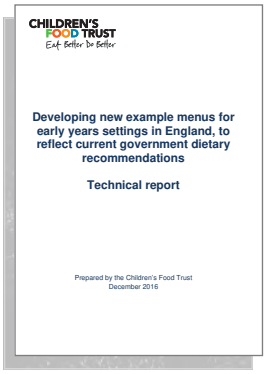
Where to find additional information



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'Eating well for 1-4 year olds: Practical guide'

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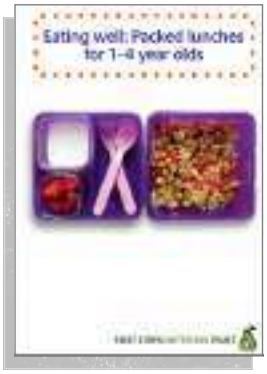

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Eating well: packed lunches for 1-4 year olds

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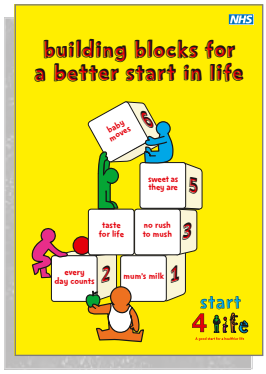
The Food Standards Agency

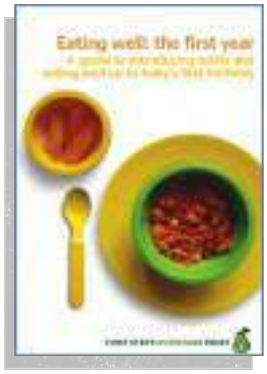
Safe Food, Better Business for Childminders

www.sfbbtraining.co.uk



Start4Life

www.nhs.uk/start4life



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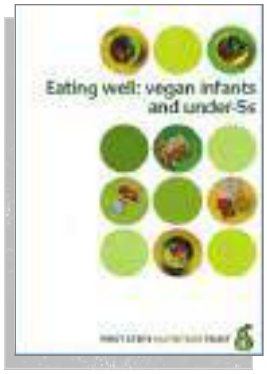

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Eat better, start better

Encouraging infants and toddlers to eat well for a better start in life is a goal most parents strive for.

But when modern lives simply don't leave parents with much time to spare, it helps to know that getting to grips with a healthy balanced diet for their kids, doesn't have to be a chore. It's something they can all do, with a bit of guidance.

Action for Children has been at the forefront of child development for close to 150 years. We partner, collaborate and share what works. By learning from and working with specialists, this practical guide is here to encourage healthy eating habits that will make the world of difference to the wellbeing of children as they grow up.

Contact us

Action for Children,
3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road,
Watford, WD18 8AG

T: 01923 361500
E: ask.us@actionforchildren.org.uk
W: www.actionforchildren.org.uk

Twitter: @actnforchildren
Facebook: www.facebook.com/actionforchildren

Registered charity nos.
England and Wales 1097940.
Scotland SC038092.
Company no. 4764232.

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