

Nutritional Guidance, Lunch Box Ideas

“Every child deserves to grow healthy and strong”

A varied diet is important: Fruit & Vegetables, Potatoes, rice & pasta, Dairy or alternatives, Meat, fish and eggs should all be included in your child's daily diet.

It is important that we encourage children to be healthy and active. We understand that not all children enjoy sandwiches at lunch time, here are some ideas of other healthy swaps :

Breadsticks, Crackerbread, Crackers, plain rice cakes, melba toast, Bread, Pitta, Wraps, Rolls, Pasta or rice, ham, chicken or cheese strips. You could even add another fruit or vegetable such as carrot sticks, cucumber sticks, cherry tomatoes (sliced, in four)

Portion size is important, for example a suitable portion of fruit for a 2 year old would be ½ of a banana, or ½ of an apple, at 3 years old encourage a little more. Please see the table below for more information.

Be wary of snacks that are aimed at children as sometimes although they contain 'real fruit' or sound healthy they can be high in sugar examples:

'Fruit bowl' strawberry yoghurt flakes contain approx. 3 teaspoons of sugar

Fruit winders contain approx. 1 teaspoon of sugar

YoYo bears contain approx. 2 teaspoons of sugar

It is natural for a child to refuse food at times. If you are worried about your child's eating, please speak to us and/or your health visitor. As long as your child is active, well and gaining weight, they are eating enough. If your child isn't eating much at mealtimes perhaps consider reducing snacks/ snack times so your child is hungrier at mealtimes.

Drinks

Even low sugar drinks can cause tooth decay and cavities, so it is important these are limited to meal times only. It is recommended that children do not drink from a bottle (any drinks) after the age of 1 as this may affect their teeth, mouth muscles and their speech.

Did you know? A standard size 'Innocent smoothie' contains between 15-18g of sugar, that's approximately 3 teaspoons

WHAT IS A PORTION?

A GUIDE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN AGED 2 – 5 YEARS OLD

Number of portions a day	2-3 years	3-5 years
Bread, rice, potato, pasta, chapatti (4-6)	1 medium slice bread 1 - 2 tablespoon mashed potato (30-60g); 6 smallish chips 1-1½ tbsp cereal or 1 weetabix ½ small chapatti	3-5 years 1-2 medium slices bread 2-3 tablespoon mashed potato (60-80g); 8-10 chips 2-3 tbsp cereal or 1-1½ weetabix 1 small chapatti
Meat, fish, egg and alternatives (2-4)	1 ½ tbsp chopped meat or fish 1 egg 1 ½ tbsp baked beans 1 fish finger 1 sausage	2-3 tbsp chopped meat or fish 2-3 tbsp baked beans 1-2 fish fingers 1-2 sausages 2-3 tbsp lentils
Fruits and Vegetables (5)	1 small piece e.g. apple, banana 1 slice melon 4 strawberries/blackberries 1-2 tbsp vegetables or small chopped salad 150ml fruit juice* 1½ tbsp lentils	1 small piece e.g. apple, pear 1 slice melon 6 grapes 2-3 tbsp vegetables or small salad 150ml fruit juice*
Milk and Dairy (2-4)	4 dice-size pieces cheese 2-3 tbsp yoghurt or custard 120ml full fat or semi skimmed milk	1 small matchbox size cheese 4 tbsp yoghurt or custard 120ml full fat or semi skimmed milk
Foods high in fat and/or sugar (1-2)	1 biscuit 4 tbsp jelly 1 small slice cake	1 biscuit 5 tbsp jelly 1 small slice cake

Choking Hazards

Early years food choking hazards Below is a table of advice on key foods for care givers who are involved with preparing and serving food for babies and young children (under 5 years old)

Pips or stones in fruit	Always check beforehand and remove hard pips or stones from fruit.
Small fruits	Cut small round fruits like grapes, cherries, berries, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, into small pieces: cut lengthways and then again cut them in halves (quarters).
Large fruits and firm fruits	Cut large fruits like melon and firm fruits like apple into slices instead of small chunks. For very young children, consider grating or mashing firm fruits, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Vegetables	Cut vegetables like carrots, cucumber and celery into narrow batons. For very young children consider grating or mashing firm vegetables and legumes like butter beans, chickpeas and tofu, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Skin on fruit and vegetables	Consider removing the skin from fruit and vegetables, especially for very young children. Peeled fruit and vegetables can be swallowed more easily.
Cooking fruit and vegetables	Consider softening firm fruit and vegetables (such as carrots, broccoli, yam and apples) by steaming or simmering until soft. Serve cut into slices or narrow batons.
Meat and fish	Advice
Sausages and hot dogs	Cut sausages and hot dogs into short strips. Cut them in half and then lengthways or as thinly as possible. Peeling the skin off the sausages helps them to be swallowed more easily.
Meat or fish	Remove bones from meat or fish. Cut meat into strips as thinly as possible. Remove skin and fat from meat and fish, it will help the food pass smoothly down the throat.
Grate or cut cheese	Grate or cut cheese into short strips. Cut lumps of cheese as narrow as possible.

Chop or flake whole nuts	Chop or flake whole nuts, peanuts and seeds. Whole nuts should not be given to children under five years old.
White bread and other breads	White bread can form a ball shape with a dough-like texture at the back of a child's throat, if not chewed properly. Brown bread or toasted white bread are good alternatives. Cut bread, chapatis, naan bread and other breads into narrow strips.
Popcorn	Do not give babies and young children popcorn.
Chewing gum and marshmallows	Do not give babies and young children chewing gum or marshmallows.
Peanut butter	Do not give babies and young children peanut butter on its own, only use as a spread.
Jelly cubes	Do not give babies and young children raw jelly cubes.
Boiled sweets and ice cubes	Do not give babies and young children boiled, hard, gooey, sticky or cough sweets, or ice cubes.
Raisins and other dried fruits	Do not give babies under the age of 1 whole raisins or dried fruits. Cut them into small pieces.

Make sure food is prepared appropriately for children under 5 years old, see: <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/>

It is also advisable that care givers are familiar with how to respond to a choking incident, see: How to stop a child from choking: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-stop-a-child-from-choking/>

and How to resuscitate a child: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-resuscitate-a-child/>