

Eat Better Start Better

Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England – A Practical Guide



**CHILDREN'S
FOOD TRUST**
Eat Better Do Better

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Contents

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This publication will periodically update as Government policy changes.

Page 4	Foreword	Page 34	Section 4 – At a glance: food and drink guidelines for each meal and snack
Page 5	Section 1 – Eat better, start better: why healthy eating matters for young children	Page 35	Balancing lunch and tea
Page 6	Why has this guide been developed?	Page 36	Breakfast at a glance
Page 6	Who is this guide for?	Page 38	Mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks at a glance
Page 7	Why is a healthy, balanced and nutritious diet essential for young children?	Page 40	Lunch at a glance
Page 7	What is the current health status of young children in England?	Page 42	Tea at a glance
Page 7	What is a healthy, balanced, nutritious diet for children aged one to five years?	Page 44	Section 5 – How to encourage children to eat well
Page 8	How does a healthy, balanced diet for children aged one to five years differ from that needed by older children and adults?	Page 45	Developing a food policy and putting it into practice
Page 8	What about food and drink for children from birth up to 12 months old?	Page 45	Communicating with children and families
Page 8	Breastfeeding	Page 46	The eating environment and social aspects of meal times
Page 9	Healthy start	Page 47	Celebrations and special occasions
Page 9	Nursery milk scheme	Page 48	Providing food for all
Page 9	Physical activity	Page 51	Encouraging fussy eaters to eat well
Page 10	Section 2 – Planning menus	Page 52	Food brought in from home
Page 11	Seven steps for planning healthy meals, snacks and drinks	Page 53	Learning about and through food
Page 12	Section 3 – The food and drink guidelines	Page 54	Cooking with children
Page 13	The food and drink guidelines	Page 55	Food safety and hygiene
Page 14	Understanding the food and drink guidelines	Page 55	Sustainability
Page 14	How to use the portion size information	Page 55	Protecting children's health – maintaining a healthy weight
Page 15	Summary of the four food groups	Page 56	Section 6 – Practical tools and resources: putting the guidelines into practice
Page 16	Guidelines for starchy foods	Page 57	Evaluating and showing others your approach to food and drink provision
Page 18	Guidelines for fruit and vegetables	Page 58	Early Years Code of Practice for Food and Drink
Page 20	Guidelines for meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein	Page 59	Code of Practice Checklist
Page 22	Guidelines for milk and dairy foods	Page 61	Menu Planning Checklist
Page 24	Guidelines for desserts, puddings and cakes	Page 66	The nutrient framework
Page 26	Guidelines for drinks	Page 69	Example spring/summer menu
Page 27	Guidelines for fat, salt and sugar	Page 70	Example autumn/winter menu
Page 30	How to read food labels	Page 71	Sizes of plates and bowls
Page 31	Iron and zinc	Page 74	Glossary
Page 32	Food additives	Page 76	Section 7 – Where to find additional information
Page 33	Ready-made meals and take-aways	Page 77	Where to find additional information
Page 33	Fortified foods	Page 78	References

Foreword



One of the most important ways to help children to eat more healthily is by establishing good food habits in their early years. National standards for school food have transformed the way children eat in school, but with almost a quarter of children overweight or obese by the time they reach even their reception year, it's clear that supporting healthy eating can never begin too early. These guidelines will be invaluable for everyone working with children in their early years as the first, nationally-recognised source of practical advice for all early years settings in England.

Judy Hargadon OBE, Chief Executive, Children's Food Trust



Daycare Trust's work with parents suggests that there is widespread support for improving the quality of food provided by nurseries and childminders. Parents are also keen for their children to learn healthy eating habits. These guidelines have a key role to play in advancing nutritional standards in the early years.

Anand Shukla, Chief Executive, Daycare Trust



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, Programme Director, Early Years, National Children's Bureau



This guidance has been tried and tested by NCMA childminders, and offers home-based practitioners some great practical tips and tools for helping children to eat healthily.

Stuart Turner, NCMA Director of Professional Standards



4Children welcomes this comprehensive guidance to support those delivering in Foundation Years in ensuring that the nutritional needs of young children are met. A much welcome resource!

Anne Longfield, Chief Executive, 4Children



We have long campaigned for clear guidance on early years nutrition and providers have been crying out for direction for several years now. Practitioners are well aware that what makes up a healthy, balanced and nutritious diet for young children differs from that of adults. However, with so much conflicting advice around it's now become a minefield to decipher what is appropriate for young children, so the timing of the voluntary guidelines couldn't be better.

Neil Leitch, Chief Executive, Pre-school Learning Alliance



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)



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The food and drink guidelines outlined in this practical guide reflect current Department of Health food and nutrition advice for children aged one to five years.

01

Eat better, Start better: why healthy eating matters for young children

- Page 6** Why has this guide been developed?
- Page 6** Who is this guide for?
- Page 7** Why is a healthy, balanced and nutritious diet essential for young children?
- Page 7** What is the current health status of young children in England?
- Page 7** What is a healthy, balanced, nutritious diet for children aged one to five years?
- Page 8** How does a healthy, balanced diet for children aged one to five years differ from that needed by older children and adults?
- Page 8** What about food and drink for children from birth up to 12 months old?
- Page 8** Breastfeeding
- Page 9** Healthy Start
- Page 9** Nursery Milk Scheme
- Page 9** Physical activity

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 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. 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.

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.

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.

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 five years.[†] It 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 Stage³ framework, as it helps to reinforce good eating habits for life.



[†] This guidance has been written to ensure the nutritional requirements of children aged from one up to five 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 Education (Nutritional Standards and Requirements for School Food (England) Regulations 2007, as amended 2008, 2011. 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.

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 well-being. Research confirms that healthy eating habits in the years before school are very important because they influence growth, development and academic achievement in later life.^{4, 5, 6}

A recent review of health inequalities by Marmot⁷ 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.

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, zinc and vitamin A, and high in saturated fat, sugar¹⁴ 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 five years?

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

Starchy foods

Fruit and vegetables

Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein

Milk and dairy foods

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.

Foods and drinks high in fat, sugar (and/or salt)

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

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

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

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

Healthy eating advice for children aged five and over and for adults is illustrated by the eatwell plate, which shows the types of food to eat, and in what proportions, for a well balanced and healthy diet.¹⁷

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 plate 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.



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. Detailed guidance on how to provide food and drink for this age group is not included within this guide.

For more information on providing healthy food and drink to children from birth up to 12 months refer to the Department of Health's 'Birth to Five',¹⁸ the resources developed by the Start4Life campaign,¹⁹ or the Caroline Walker Trust practical guide 'Eating Well in the First Year of Life'.²⁰

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.¹⁸ Breastfeeding also has significant short and long term benefits for both mothers and their babies. It helps to protect children from gastroenteritis, ear and respiratory infections, eczema, asthma, diabetes and obesity in later life.^{18, 21, 22}

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.

Advice on expressing and storing breast milk can be obtained from a health visitor or online from NHS choices²⁴ or the Association of Breastfeeding Mothers.²⁵

Healthy Start

As a precaution, the Department of Health²⁶ recommends that from six months to five years of age, children should be given a vitamin supplement containing vitamins A, C and D unless they are drinking 500ml of infant formula a day or are eating a varied diet with a wide range of foods to provide an adequate intake of vitamins and minerals.

In 2006, the Healthy Start Scheme²⁷ 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 (189 ml) 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 well-being. 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

Page 11 Seven steps for planning healthy meals, snacks and drinks

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. 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 6. Introduce new menu cycles at least twice a year.

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

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 49.

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

- Page 13** The food and drink guidelines
- Page 14** Understanding the food and drink guidelines
- Page 15** Summary of the four food groups
- Page 16** Guidelines for starchy foods
- Page 18** Guidelines for fruit and vegetables
- Page 20** Guidelines for meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein
- Page 22** Guidelines for milk and dairy foods
- Page 24** Guidelines for desserts, puddings and cakes
- Page 26** Guidelines for drinks
- Page 27** Guidelines for fat
- Page 28** Guidelines for salt
- Page 29** Guidelines for sugar
- Page 30** How to read food labels
- Page 31** Iron and zinc
- Page 32** Food additives
- Page 33** Ready-made meals and take-aways
- Page 33** Fortified foods

The food and drink guidelines

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 five 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, non-milk extrinsic 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 66.

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. 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.
- **Average portion sizes for children aged one to five years**.** Typical portion sizes are given as a range:
 - the smaller portion sizes are appropriate for children aged one to two years
 - the larger portion sizes are appropriate for children aged three to four years

However, remember that the appetite of young children will vary, and 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 five years and are not suitable for children under the age of one year.

Understanding the food and drink guidelines

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.

How to use the 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 section 3 include examples of typical portion sizes of different food and drink for children aged one to five 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.

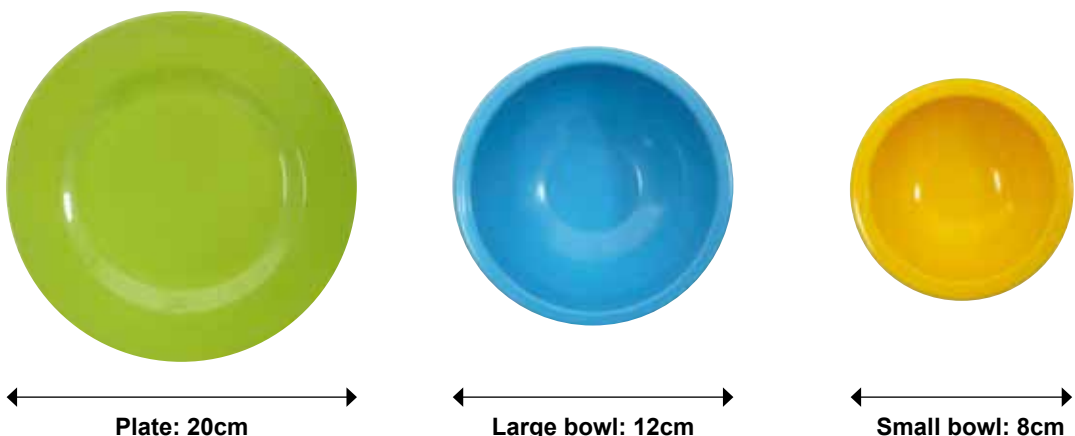
The food photos illustrate typical portion sizes for one to five year olds. The actual portion size of each food is specified under the photograph.

The actual sizes of the plates and bowls included in pictures throughout section 3 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 page 71–73.

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 five years and are not suitable for children under one year of age.

Summary of the four food groups and the nutrients they provide

The table below 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
Starchy foods	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, dried and juiced fruit and 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
Meat, fish, eggs, beans and non-dairy sources of protein	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)
Milk and dairy foods	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

Starchy foods

✓ 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.

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











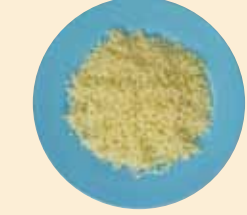


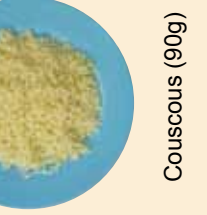







Some processed starchy foods can be high in salt, saturated fat and sugar. Use the guidelines below and the information about food labelling on page 30 to limit these products, and choose versions which are lower in salt, saturated fat and sugar.

- ✓ Choose breakfast cereals with low or medium sugar content. Avoid provision of cereals that are high in sugar, such as sugar-coated or chocolate-flavoured cereals.
- ✓ Choose bread and bread products with a low salt content where possible.
- ✓ 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, as these can be high in salt.

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.

Starchy foods

Good choices of foods to serve	Typical portion sizes as served (cooked) ^{††}	Portion sizes in practice, images not to scale ^{††}		
<p>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.</p>	<p>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)</p>	 <p>Wholemeal toast (25g)</p>	 <p>Pitta bread (35g)</p>	 <p>Rice cakes (16g)</p>
<p>Potatoes or sweet potatoes: includes boiled, mashed, jacket and baked.</p>	<p>1 small baked or 1–2 boiled potatoes (80–100g) 2–3 tablespoons mashed potato (80–100g)</p>	 <p>New potatoes (90g)</p>	 <p>Mashed sweet potato (90g)</p>	 <p>Jacket potato (90g)</p>
<p>Other starchy root vegetables: includes boiled, mashed or baked yam, plantain, cocoyam and cassava.</p>	<p>1 small baked root vegetable (80–100g) 2–3 tablespoons mashed, diced starchy vegetables (80–100g)</p>	 <p>White spaghetti (90g)</p>	 <p>Couscous (90g)</p>	 <p>Brown rice (90g)</p>
<p>Pasta and noodles: includes boiled white and wholemeal spaghetti, noodles and pasta shapes.</p>	<p>3–4 tablespoons pasta or noodles (80g–100g)</p>	 <p>Rice crispies (25g)</p>	 <p>Corn flakes (25g)</p>	 <p>Porridge (100g)</p>
<p>Rice: includes boiled white and brown rice.</p>	<p>2–3 tablespoons rice (80g–100g)</p>	 <p>Low or medium sugar breakfast cereals (20g–30g)</p>	 <p>Wheat biscuits (20g–30g)</p>	 <p>Porridge made with milk (100–110g)</p>
<p>Other grains: includes couscous, bulgur wheat, maize (polenta) and cornmeal.</p>	<p>2–3 tablespoons grains (80g–100g)</p>	 <p>Rice crispies (25g)</p>	 <p>Corn flakes (25g)</p>	 <p>Porridge (100g)</p>
<p>Low or medium sugar breakfast cereals: includes porridge, cornflakes, wheat biscuits and rice crispies.</p>	<p>3–5 tablespoons breakfast cereal (20g–30g) 1–1½ wheat biscuits (20g–30g) ½–½ bowl porridge made with milk (100–110g)</p>	 <p>Rice crispies (25g)</p>	 <p>Corn flakes (25g)</p>	 <p>Porridge (100g)</p>

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

Fruit and vegetables

✓ Food and drink guidelines

💡 Good practice

⚠️ Food safety



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
 - cut large fruits, like melon, into slices instead of small chunks.

What does this food group include?

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

Fruit juice can count as only one portion of fruit each day however often you provide it.

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.

Guidelines for planning menus

How frequently should foods from this group be provided?

- ✓ Children should have five portions of fruit and vegetables across each day (including those provided at home).
- ✓ Provide a portion of fruit and/or vegetables at each meal and with some snacks.
- ✓ Provide a variety of fruit and vegetables, aiming to offer at least four different types during full day care, and two different types during sessional care.

- ✓ Provide fruit juice at meal times only and dilute it (half juice, half water) as it contains sugars that may damage children's teeth.
- ✓ 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.

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, and avoid baked beans containing artificial sweeteners (see page 29). Baked beans can only count as a vegetable once each week.





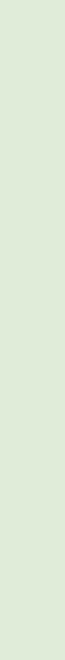
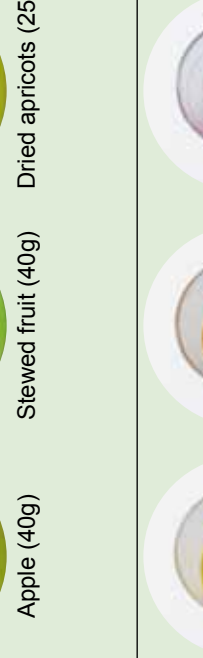


Preparing and cooking fruit and vegetables

- 💡 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.

REMEMBER

- Provide a variety of fruit and vegetables.
- Check typical portion sizes in the table on page 19.
- Provide diluted fruit juice, 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.

Fruit and vegetables

Good choices of foods to serve	Typical portion sizes as served ^{††}	Portion sizes in practice, images not to scale ^{††}
<p>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.</p>	<p>1–2 tablespoons cooked vegetables (40g) Small bowl vegetable soup (150g)</p>	 <p>Carrots and peas (40g) Sweetcorn (40g) Peas (40g)</p>
<p>Salad vegetables: includes lettuce, other leaves, watercress, celery, cucumber, tomato, raw carrot, raw pepper, radish and beetroot.</p>	<p>4–6 raw vegetable sticks (40g)</p>	 <p>Lentils (40g) Chickpeas (40g) Soya beans (40g)</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>½–1 tablespoons pulses (40g)</p>	 <p>Lentils (40g) Chickpeas (40g) Soya beans (40g)</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>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)</p>	 <p>Apple (40g) Stewed fruit (40g) Dried apricots (25g)</p>
<p>Canned fruit in natural juice: includes pear, peaches, pineapple, mandarin oranges, prunes and guava.</p>	<p>1–2 tablespoons fruit canned in natural juice (40–65g)</p>	 <p>Apple (40g) Stewed fruit (40g) Dried apricots (25g)</p>
<p>Stewed fruit without added sugar: includes stewed apple, stewed dried fruit and stewed plums.</p>	<p>1–2 tablespoons stewed fruit (40g)</p>	 <p>Apple (40g) Stewed fruit (40g) Dried apricots (25g)</p>
<p>Dried fruit (at meal times only): includes raisins, dried apricots, dates, dried figs and prunes.</p>	<p>½–1 tablespoon or 2–5 pieces dried fruit (15–30g)</p>	 <p>Apple (40g) Stewed fruit (40g) Dried apricots (25g)</p>
<p>Unsweetened, diluted fruit juice (meal times only): includes orange, apple and pineapple juice (diluted half juice to half water) and smoothies (100% puréed fruit, diluted half fruit to half water).</p>	<p>Unsweetened fruit juice, diluted half juice and half water (100ml = 50ml juice and 50ml water)</p>	 <p>Diluted orange juice (100ml) Diluted apple juice (100ml) Diluted fruit smoothie (100ml)</p>

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 (e.g. 20g sliced apple, 20g banana).

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

Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein

✔ 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 meat, fish, meat alternative, eggs or pulses as part of lunch and tea each day.
- ✔ 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 red meat, poultry, fish and meat alternatives or pulses each week as part of lunch and tea.
- ✔ Each week provide one lunch and one tea for all children, which uses a meat alternative or pulses as the protein source.
- ✔ Provide vegetarian or vegan children with two or three portions of meat alternatives, pulses or nuts* each day.

- ☀ It is good practice to provide vegetarian or vegan children with a variety of meat alternatives, pulses and nuts 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

- ✔ Choose canned pulses with no added salt or sugar.
- ✔ Choose reduced salt and sugar baked beans and avoid baked beans containing artificial sweeteners.

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

Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein

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

^{††} Portion sizes are typical example portion sizes for children aged one to five 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

Milk and dairy foods

✔ Food and drink guidelines

💡 Good practice

⚠ Food safety



- ✔ 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 milk 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 (products with more than 15g sugar per 100g are high in sugar) or use natural (plain) yoghurt and plain fromage frais and add fruit to sweeten.
- ✔ 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.

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 milk as it has been found to contain small amounts of arsenic.

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.

Guidelines for planning menus

How frequently should foods from this group be provided?

- ✔ Children should have three portions of milk and dairy foods each day, from meals, snacks and drinks (including those they have at home).

Which milk and dairy products should be provided?

- ✔ 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.








REMEMBER

- Children should have three portions of milk and dairy foods each day.
- 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.

^{##} 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.

Milk and dairy foods

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

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

* Be allergy aware: soya milk 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.

Guidelines for planning menus






- ✓ A dessert should be provided as part of lunch and tea each day.
- 💡 Vary the desserts you offer with main meals each week. Provide one dessert from each of the following groups each week to ensure children are getting a variety of different dessert types:
 - hot fruit-based desserts such as crumbles or baked apples
 - milk-based desserts such as semolina, rice pudding or custard
 - yoghurt or fromage frais
 - cakes and biscuits containing fruit, such as carrot cake or fruit flapjack
 - cold desserts such as fruit salad.

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ 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.

REMEMBER

- Provide a dessert as part of lunch and tea each day.
- Provide a variety of different desserts each week.
- Avoid sweet foods such as cakes, biscuits and confectionery between meals.

Examples of desserts, puddings and cakes

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 (50g) Banana and raisin flapjack (50g)	
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 five 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.

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.

- ✔ 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

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

Guidelines for drink provision

- ✔ Water and milk are the only drinks that should be provided between meals and with snacks 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.
- ✔ 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. Fruit juice should be provided only at meal times (not with snacks) and should be diluted (half juice and half water).
- ✔ Avoid fruit juice drinks – these are not the same as fruit juice. Products labelled as fruit juice drinks generally contain only a small proportion of fruit juice with water and added sugar, and provide little nutritional value. Check the ingredient list on product labels and avoid products containing added sugar.

REMEMBER

- Ensure children have access to drinking water throughout the day.
- Offer only water or milk as drinks between meals.
- Offer fruit juice at meal times only, and dilute it (half juice and half water).
- Avoid fruit juice drinks, squash, fizzy drinks, flavoured water and drinks containing added caffeine or other stimulants.

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 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 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 olive oil.

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.

✔ Food and drink guidelines

💡 Good practice

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.

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 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. 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.

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.

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.
Limit confectionery such as chocolate chips and hundreds and thousands and use only as part of cakes or desserts.
- ✔ Offer only water or milk as drinks between meals.
- ✔ If you provide fruit juice offer this at meal times only and dilute (half juice and half water) to reduce the risk of tooth decay.
- ✔ 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 a low or medium sugar content. Avoid cereals that are high 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).

- ✔ Avoid foods and drinks containing artificial sweeteners. They may encourage children to prefer very sweet foods.

Artificial sweeteners are not permitted to be added to foods designed for infants and young children. 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.

REMEMBER

- Eating sugary food and drinks too often can lead to tooth decay.
- Avoid sweet foods such as cakes, biscuits and confectionery between meals.
- Provide dried fruit and diluted fruit juice at meal times only.
- Avoid food and drinks containing artificial sweeteners.

✔ Food and drink guidelines

💡 Good practice

How to read food labels

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.

- When planning meals and snacks it is a good idea to look at the ingredients list and the nutritional information on product labels. This will help you to choose products which are 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.
- The label usually includes information on energy (calories), protein, carbohydrate and fat. It may also provide additional information on saturated fat, sugar, fibre, sodium 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 Health³² 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 low or medium in saturated fat, sugar and low in salt (sodium), and limit those that are high.

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	3.0–20g	More than 20g
Saturated fat	1.5g or less	1.5–5g	More than 5g
Sugar	5.0g or less	5.0–15g	More than 15g
Salt	0.3g or less	0.3–1.5g	More than 1.5g
Sodium	0.1g or less	0.1–0.6g	More than 0.6g

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

Brand 1 Baked beans		Brand 2 Reduced salt and sugar baked beans	
Nutritional information		Nutritional information	
Typical values	Per 100g	Typical values	Per 100g
Energy	355 kJ 84 kcal	Energy	311 kJ 73 kcal
Protein	5.2g	Protein	5.4g
Carbohydrate	15.3g	Carbohydrate	12.5g
of which sugars	5.9g	of which sugars	2.8g
Fat	0.6g	Fat	0.6g
of which saturates	0.1g	of which saturates	0.1g
Fibre	3.7g	Fibre	3.8g
Sodium	530mg	Sodium	330mg
equivalent as salt	1.3g	equivalent as salt	0.8g

Brand 2 baked beans contain less sugar and less sodium/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 five 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 69–70.
- The recipes for these meal choices can be downloaded from the Children’s Food Trust early years web page.³⁶
- 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
Starchy foods	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
Meat, fish, eggs, beans and non-dairy sources of protein	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
Milk and dairy foods		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 additives

✓ **Food and drink guidelines**

💡 **Good practice**

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.³³

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) advises that the colours and preservatives 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.³⁴ 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.

✓ Preservatives to avoid

- Sodium benzoate (E211)

✓ 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.

Example of product packaging listing colours to avoid



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.



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.³⁵ Margarine also has to be fortified, with vitamins A and D.

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 milk)³⁶, 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

³⁶ 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

Page 35 Balancing lunch and tea

Page 36 Breakfast at a glance

Page 38 Mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks at a glance

Page 40 Lunch at a glance

Page 42 Tea at a glance

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

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 Group	Food and drink guidelines
Starchy foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Provide a portion of starchy food as part of breakfast each day. ✔ Provide at least three different varieties of starchy food across breakfasts each week. ✔ 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 low or medium sugar content. Avoid cereals high in sugar such as sugar-coated or chocolate-flavoured cereals. ✔ Choose bread and bread products with a low salt content where possible.
Fruit and vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Provide a portion of fruit or vegetables at breakfast each day. ✔ If you offer fruit juice at breakfast, this should be unsweetened and diluted (half juice and half water).
Meat, fish, eggs, beans and non-dairy sources of protein	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 💡 Food from this group provides a useful source of iron and zinc and can be provided as part of breakfast.
Milk and dairy foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Children should have 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Children must have access to fresh drinking water. ✔ If you offer fruit juice at breakfast, this should be unsweetened and diluted (half juice and half water).

Examples of breakfasts meeting the food and drink guidelines using average portion sizes for children aged one to five 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).



A slice of malt loaf (35g) and spread (4g) and a plain full-fat yoghurt (60g) with a cup of diluted apple juice (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 the example menus and recipes on the Children's Food Trust website.³⁶

Mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks at a glance

Menu planning advice	<p>Plan menus for snacks to ensure that they are varied across the week and that the food provision across the day is balanced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Avoid sweet foods such as cakes, biscuits and confectionery between meals.
Food Group	Food and drink guidelines
Starchy foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Provide a starchy food 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 low salt content where possible.
Fruit and vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Provide fruit or vegetables as part of some snacks. ✔ Provide a variety of fruit and vegetables across the day, and each week. ✔ Dried fruit should not be provided as part of snacks.
Meat, fish, eggs, beans and non-dairy sources of protein	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ 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.
Milk and dairy foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Children should have three portions of milk and dairy foods each day (including those provided at home); a portion of milk or dairy food can be provided at snack time.
Drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Children must have access to fresh drinking water. ✔ Water and milk are the only drinks that should be provided between meals and as part of snacks.

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



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



Peach (40g) and full fat fromage frais (60g) with 2 rice cakes (16g) and a cup of water (100ml).



Tomato (40g) and full fat mozzarella cheese (17g) with low salt 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 the example menus and recipes on the Children's Food Trust website.³⁶

Lunch at a glance

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

Menu planning advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Each lunch should include a main course and a dessert.
Food Group	Food and drink guidelines
Starchy foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ 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.
Fruit and vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Provide a portion of fruit and/or vegetables as part of lunch every day. ✔ Provide a variety of fruit and vegetables 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. ✔ If you offer fruit juice at lunch, this should be unsweetened and diluted (half juice and half water).
Meat, fish, eggs, beans and non-dairy sources of protein	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Provide a portion of meat, fish, meat alternative, eggs or pulses 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 red meat, poultry, fish and meat alternatives or pulses each week as part of lunch. 💡 It is good practice to provide vegetarian or vegan children with a variety of meat alternatives, pulses and nuts* each week as part of lunch. ✔ Provide one lunch for all children each week which uses a meat alternative or pulses as the protein source. ✔ Provide a portion of oily fish at least once every three weeks; this can be provided as part of lunch or tea. ✔ Limit the provision of meat products, fish products and products made from meat alternatives to once a week for each of the three types.
Milk and dairy foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Children should have three portions of milk and dairy food 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Children must have access to fresh drinking water. ✔ If fruit juice is provided as part of lunch, this should be unsweetened and diluted (half juice and half water).

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

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



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

Drink: Glass of water (100ml).



Dessert: Carrot cake (50g).

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 diluted orange juice (100ml, half juice and half water).



Dessert: Eve's pudding and custard (60g).

Drink: Glass of diluted orange juice (100ml, half juice and half water).

For more examples of lunches meeting the food and drink guidelines, see the example menus and recipes on the Children's Food Trust website.³⁶

Tea at a glance

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

Menu planning advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Each tea should include a main course and a dessert.
Food Group	Food and drink guidelines
Starchy foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Provide a portion of starchy food as part of teas each week. ✔ 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.
Fruit and vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Provide a portion of fruit and/or vegetables as part of tea every day. ✔ Provide a variety of fruit and vegetables 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. ✔ If you offer fruit juice at tea, this should be unsweetened and diluted (half juice and half water).
Meat, fish, eggs, beans and non-dairy sources of protein	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Provide a portion of meat, fish, meat alternative, eggs or pulses 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 red meat, poultry, fish and meat alternatives or pulses each week as part of tea. 💡 It is good practice to provide vegetarian or vegan children with a variety of meat alternatives, pulses and nuts* each week as part of tea. ✔ Provide one tea for all children each week which uses a meat alternative or pulses as the protein source. ✔ Provide a portion of oily fish at least once every three weeks; this can be provided as part of lunch or tea. ✔ Limit the provision of meat products, fish products and products made from meat alternatives to once a week for each of the three types.
Milk and dairy foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Children should have three portions of milk and dairy food 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 tea.
Drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Children must have access to fresh drinking water. ✔ If fruit juice is provided as part of tea, this should be unsweetened and diluted (half juice and half water).

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

Example of teas meeting the food and drink guidelines using average portion sizes for children aged one to five 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: Crunchy summer crumble (60g) 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: Blueberry muffin (50g).

Drink: Glass of water (100ml).

For more examples of teas meeting the food and drink guidelines, see the example menus and recipes on the Children's Food Trust website.³⁶

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:

- Page 45** Developing a food policy and putting it into practice
- Page 45** Communicating with children and their families
- Page 46** The eating environment and social aspects of meal times
- Page 47** Celebrations and special occasions
- Page 48** Providing food for all:
 - Managing special dietary needs
 - Food allergies and intolerances
 - Vegetarian diets
 - Cultural and religious diets
- Page 51** Encouraging fussy eaters to eat well
- Page 52** Food brought in from home
- Page 53** Learning about and through food
- Page 54** Cooking with children
- Page 55** Food safety and hygiene
- Page 55** Sustainability
- Page 55** Protecting children's health – maintaining a healthy weight

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 breastfeeding
- dental health.

You will find an example of a food policy on the Children's Food Trust early years web page.³⁶

“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

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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 on dietary requirements for children with special needs, please refer to the Caroline Walker Trust publication 'Eating well: children and adults with learning disabilities'.³⁷

Food allergies and food intolerances

Food allergies affect an estimated five to eight percent of children in the UK.³⁸ 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.

Tomato and lentil lasagne

Ingredients - Serves 4

- Onion, peeled 100g
- Garlic, peeled 2 cloves
- Olives oil 1 tablespoon
- Lasagne 100g
- Tomato sauce 1.5 litres
- Lasagne sheets 10 sheets
- Water 1 litre
- Red lentils, dried 240g
- Salt 1/2 teaspoon
- Black pepper 1/2 teaspoon
- Lasagne sheets 10 sheets
- Lasagne sauce 1.5 litres
- Cheddar cheese, halved 175g

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4.
2. Chop the onion and garlic.
3. Heat the oil in a large pan on a medium heat, add the onion and garlic, and cook for 5 minutes until the onion has softened. Then add the lasagne, tomato sauce, water and lentils and leave to simmer for 20 minutes.
4. Prepare a cup of white sauce in a separate pan until the ingredients are at the heat. Cook it for 5 minutes, then add the lasagne sheets and the white sauce. Stir well.
5. In an ovenproof dish, layer the tomato and lentil mixture and white sauce starting with a layer of white sauce.
6. Cook the lasagne and put into the hot oven for 40 minutes or until bubbling, hot throughout and golden on top.

Suggested portion size for weights

- 1-4 years - 100g
- 5-12 years - 150g
- 13-4 years - 170g

Preparation time 30 minutes

Cooking time 60 minutes

Serving suggestions

Serve with garlic bread (see page 31) and a drink (see page 32)

Tip

Make sure all the pasta is covered as food is eaten properly

Recipe adapted from Sharon Taylor (Children)

Vegetarian diets

Vegetarians do not eat meat, or meat products such as lard or stock and may not eat fish. 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
- **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.³⁹

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 meat alternative such as soya, tofu, textured vegetable protein or Quorn™, eggs, pulses or nuts* to provide protein and minerals such as iron and zinc.
- Include a variety of different protein sources across each week for example meat alternatives can be used once or twice, pulses and beans two to three times, and eggs and cheese, once or twice per 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 69–70.

The recipes for these meal choices can be downloaded from the Children's Food Trust early years web page.³⁶

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 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.⁴⁰

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.⁴¹ 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.⁴²
- 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

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

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'.⁴³

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.

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 starchy food (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 fruit and/or vegetables (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. Fruit juice (diluted half juice, half water).
A portion of meat, fish, eggs, beans or other non-dairy sources of protein (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 milk or dairy food (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, cakes and biscuits 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.
A drink	Fruit juice (diluted half juice, half water). 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 the slices 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
Starchy food (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)	Fresh sliced fruit – apples, bananas, grapes. Vegetable sticks – carrot, cucumber.
Milk or dairy food (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 to drink between meals. 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.⁴⁴

- **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 Schools⁴⁵ and the Royal Horticultural Society.⁴⁶
- **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

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.

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, contact Let's Get Cooking.⁴⁷

- 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 meals, or taken home to eat as part of a meal.



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 “managers/leaders 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”.

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’.⁴³



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 website⁴⁸

- avoid buying fish rated as ‘fish to avoid’ by the Marine Conservation Society⁴⁹ and buy fish from sustainably managed stocks which is Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)⁵⁰ 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 Defra⁵¹ for more information
- growing vegetables and herbs to use within menus.

More information for early years settings about providing sustainable food is available in ‘Sustainable Food: A Guide for Early Years Settings’.⁵²

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 pathway⁵³ 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.

06

Practical tools and resources – putting the guidelines into practice.

- Page 57** Evaluating and showing others your approach to food and drink provision
- Page 58** Early Years Code of Practice for Food and Drink
- Page 59** Code of Practice Checklist
- Page 61** Menu Planning Checklist
- Page 66** The nutrient framework
- Page 69** Example one week spring/summer menu
- Page 70** Example one week autumn/winter menu
- Page 71** Sizes of plates and bowls
- Page 74** Glossary

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 that 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 _____

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 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.				

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 try 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.				

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 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 varieties of starchy food across breakfasts each week.		
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 low or medium sugar content. Avoid cereals high in sugar such as sugar-coated or chocolate-flavoured cereals.		
1.5	Provide a portion of fruit and/or vegetables as part of breakfast each day.		
1.6	If fruit juice is provided as part of breakfast, this should be unsweetened and diluted half juice, half water.		
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 as part of at least once snack each day.		
2.2	Provide at least three different varieties of starchy food across snacks each week.		
2.3	Provide fruit or vegetables 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	Meat, fish, eggs and meat alternatives can be provided as part of snacks once or twice each week.		
2.6	Water and milk are the only drinks that should be provided between meals and as part of snacks. Ensure children have access to fresh drinking water		
2.7	Avoid sweet foods such as cakes, biscuits and confectionery between meals.		

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.		
3.2	Provide a portion of starchy food as part of lunch every 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 a portion of fruit and/or vegetables as part of lunch every day and provide a variety across the week.		
3.7	Provide a portion of meat, fish, meat alternative, eggs or pulses as part of lunch every 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 meat alternative or pulses as the protein source.		
3.10	Provide a portion of oily fish at least once every three weeks as part of lunch or tea.		
3.11	If fruit juice is provided as part of lunch, this should be unsweetened and diluted half juice, half water.		
3.12	Ensure children have access to fresh drinking water.		

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.		
4.2	Provide a portion of starchy food as part of tea every 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 fruit and/or vegetables as part of tea every day and provide a variety across the week.		
4.7	Provide a portion of meat, fish, meat alternative, eggs or pulses as part of tea every day.		
4.8	Provide a variety of meat, fish and meat alternatives as part of tea across the week.		
4.9	Provide one tea for all children each week which uses a meat alternative or pulses as the protein source.		
4.10	Provide a portion of oily fish at least once every three weeks as part of lunch or tea.		
4.11	If fruit juice is provided as part of tea, this should be unsweetened and diluted half juice, half water.		
4.12	Ensure children have access to fresh drinking water.		

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.	
Starchy foods (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 low salt content where possible.	
6.3	Limit canned pasta in sauce (such as spaghetti hoops).	
6.4	Avoid flavoured dried rice, pasta and noodle products.	
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 fruit and vegetables each day, including those provided at home.	
7.2	Provide a variety of fruit and vegetables. 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.	
Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein (for more information, see pages 20–21 of the practical guide)		
8.1	Provide vegetarian or vegan children with two or three portions of meat alternatives, pulses or nuts 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.	
Milk and dairy food (for more information about milk and dairy food, see pages 22–23 of the practical guide)		
9.1	Children should have three portions of milk and dairy foods each day, from meals, snacks and drinks, including those they have at home.	
9.2	Provide full-fat milk for children from one year up to two years as their main drink.	

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
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	Water and milk are the only drinks that should be provided between meals.		
10.3	Fruit juice (diluted half water, half juice) should be provided at meal times only.		
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, sugar and salt (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 and drinks containing artificial sweeteners, flavour enhancers (such as monosodium glutamate (MSG)), and the artificial colours and preservative listed on page 32.		
12.2	Avoid ready meals, takeaways and functional foods, such as cholesterol-lowering products.		

NOTE

The estimated average requirement (EAR) for energy, and the nutrient-based standards for fat, saturated fat, carbohydrate and non-milk extrinsic sugars based on this EAR, as specified in the nutrient framework are calculated from values reported by COMA¹³ not the 2011 Dietary Recommendations for Energy published by SACN⁵⁴.

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 five years.

The food and drink guidelines are underpinned by a nutrient framework which includes energy and the nutrients protein, fat, carbohydrate, non-milk extrinsic 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-based standards included in the nutrient framework were agreed by the Advisory Panel on Food and Nutrition in Early Years² and are based upon current UK Dietary Reference Values (DRVs)¹³, specifying the amounts of energy and nutrients needed by different groups of people, 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 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.



††† The Advisory Panel on Food and Nutrition in Early Years agreed that it would be acceptable to set guidance allowing menus planned over a week or more to have a maximum of 125% of the current population target for salt for children aged one to five years.

††† This guidance has been written to ensure the nutritional requirements of children aged from one up to five 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%
Non-milk extrinsic sugars	% of food energy	Not more than 11%	Not more than 11%	Not more than 11%	Not more than 11%	Not more than 11%	Not more than 11%
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 105%	At least 45%	At least 35%	At least 10%	At least 35%	At least 25%
Zinc	% of the RNI	At least 105%	At least 45%	At least 35%	At least 10%	At least 35%	At least 25%
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 90%	At least 40%	At least 30%	At least 10%	At least 30%	At least 20%
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 16, Advisory Panel on Food and Nutrition in Early Years (2011) Laying the Table: Recommendations for National Food and Nutrition Guidance for Early Years settings in England.²

* Experience suggests that current salt targets for children under five years are difficult to consistently adhere to and are a population goal. The guidance recommended by the Advisory Panel will allow settings to consistently adhere to 125% population target.

§§§ 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							
Nutrient	Min/Max	Full daycare	Morning session: Snack and lunch	Afternoon session: Snack and tea	Snack only	Lunch only	Tea only
Energy (kcal)	Approx	1160	516	387	129	387	258
Fat (g)	Approx	45.0	20.0	15.0	5.0	15.0	10.0
Total carbohydrate (g)	Approx	155.0	68.8	51.6	17.2	51.6	34.4
Non-milk extrinsic sugars (NMES) (g)	Max	34.2	15.2	11.4	3.8	11.4	7.6
Protein (g)	Min	14.0	6.3	4.7	1.6	4.7	3.1
Iron (mg)	Min	7.2	3.1	2.4	0.7	2.4	1.7
Zinc (mg)	Min	5.7	2.4	1.9	0.5	1.9	1.4
Calcium (mg)	Min	330	150	110	40	110	70
Vitamin A (µg)	Min	390	170	130	40	130	90
Vitamin C (mg)	Min	27	12	9	3	9	6
Sodium (mg)	Max	810	360	270	90	270	180
Salt (g)	Max	2.1	0.9	0.7	0.2	0.7	0.5

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.

Source: Adapted from Table 17 Advisory Panel on Food and Nutrition in Early Years (2011) Laying the Table: Recommendations for National Food and Nutrition Guidance for Early Years settings in England.²

Note: The estimated average requirement (EAR) for energy, and the nutrient-based standards for fat, saturated fat, carbohydrate and non-milk extrinsic sugars based on this EAR, as specified in the nutrient framework are calculated from values reported by COMA¹³ not the 2011 Dietary Recommendations for Energy published by SACN.⁵⁴

Example one week spring/summer menu meeting the food and drink guidelines

This spring/summer one week menu meets the food and drink guidelines and the average energy and nutrient requirements for children aged one to five. Full recipes, photos and portion size information for this menu are available from the Children's Food Trust website.³⁶

Meal	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast Planned to provide about 20% of a child's daily energy and nutritional requirements	Cornflakes (25g) with whole milk (100ml) and raisins (25g) Toasted crumpet (20g) and spread (4g) Water (100ml)	Pear (40g) and hard boiled egg (50g) with wholemeal bread (25g) and spread (4g) Whole milk (100ml)	Rice crispies (25g) and milk (100ml) with dried apricots (25g) and banana (40g) Water (100ml)	Plain yoghurt (60g) with malt loaf (35g) and spread (4g) Diluted apple juice (100ml)	Wheat biscuits (25g) with whole milk (100ml) and mixed berries (40g) Toasted teacake (35g) and spread (4g) Water (100ml)
Mid-morning snack Planned to provide about 10% of a child's daily energy and nutritional requirements	Rice cakes (16g) and banana (40g) Water (100ml)	Toasted muffin (30g) with spread (4g) and melon (40g) Water (100ml)	Toasted bagel (50g) and spread (4g) with strawberries (40g) Whole milk (100ml)	Wholemeal toast (25g) and spread (4g) with apple and grapes (40g) Water (100ml)	Sugar snap peas (40g) and houmous (40g) Water (100ml)
Lunch Planned to provide about 30% of a child's daily energy and nutritional requirements	Beef bolognese (110g) or Quorn™ bolognese (v) (100g) with white spaghetti (90g) Carrot cake (50g) Water (100ml)	Chickpea and vegetable curry (v) (120g) with brown rice (90g) Raspberry puree (40g) with fromage frais (60g) Water (100ml)	Pork and apple casserole (100g) or mixed bean casserole (v) (110g) with new potatoes (90g) and carrots (40g) Pineapple upside down pudding (60g) with custard (60g) Water (100ml)	Lamb burger (50g) or bean burger (v) (60g) with homemade tomato sauce (40g), potato wedges (90g) and garden peas (40g) Banana buns (50g) Water (100ml)	Salmon and broccoli pasta (200g) or broccoli and lentil pasta (v) (200g) with sweetcorn (40g) Eve's pudding (60g) with custard (60g) Diluted orange juice (100ml)
Mid-afternoon snack Planned to provide about 10% of a child's daily energy and nutritional requirements	Strawberries (40g) and plain yoghurt (60g) Water (100ml)	Breadsticks (7g) with mozzarella balls (17g) and cherry tomatoes (40g) Whole milk (100ml)	White bread (25g) and spread (4g) with grapes (40g) Water (100ml)	Pitta bread (35g) with tsatziki (30g) and carrot sticks (40g) Water (100ml)	Sliced peach (40g) with fromage frais (60g) and rice cakes (16) Water (100ml)
Tea Planned to provide about 20% of a child's daily energy and nutritional requirements	Vegetable and beef enchiladas (140g) or vegetable and bean enchiladas (v) (150g) Fresh fruit platter (40g) Water (100ml)	Ratatouille (50g) with mozzarella cheese (15g) and a jacket potato (90g) Ginger biscuits (15g) with sliced apple (20g) Water (100ml)	Tuna and sweetcorn wholemeal pasta (150g) or chickpea and sweetcorn wholemeal pasta (v) (160g) with red pepper sticks (40g) Blueberry muffin (50g) Water (100ml)	Chicken and vegetable cous cous salad (150g) or Quorn™ and vegetable cous cous salad (150g) Rice pudding with sultanas (100g) Water (100ml)	Savoury omelette (70g) with potato salad (90g) and cucumber (40g) Crunchy summer crumble (60g) with yoghurt (60g) Water (100ml)

Note: The spring/summer menu has been developed using the estimated average requirement (EAR) for energy, and the nutrient-based standards for fat, saturated fat, carbohydrate and non-milk extrinsic sugars based on this EAR, as specified by COMA¹³ not the 2011 Dietary Recommendations for Energy published by SACN.⁵⁴

Example one week autumn/winter menu meeting the food and drink guidelines

This autumn/winter one week menu meets the food and drink guidelines and the average energy and nutrient requirements for children aged one to five. Full recipes, photos and portion size information for this menu are available from the Children's Food Trust website.³⁶

Meal	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast Planned to provide about 20% of a child's daily energy and nutritional requirements	Wheat biscuits (25g) with yoghurt (60g) and dried apricots (25g) Diluted apple juice (100ml)	Porridge (100g) with raisins (25g) Wholemeal toast (25g) and spread (4g) Water (100ml)	Malt wheats (25g) with whole milk (100ml) and chopped plum (40g) Toasted bagel (50g) and spread (4g) Water (100ml)	Toasted muffin (30g) and spread (4g) with scrambled egg (50g), tomato (20g) and mushrooms (20g) Whole milk (100ml)	Rice crispies (25g) with whole milk (100ml) Toasted teacake (35g) and spread (4g) Diluted orange juice (100ml)
Mid-morning snack Planned to provide about 10% of a child's daily energy and nutritional requirements	Toasted English muffin (30g) and spread (4g) with a Clementine (40g) Water (100ml)	Wholemeal pitta bread (35g) with tuna dip (30g), celery (20g) and red pepper sticks (20g) Whole milk (100ml)	Plain pancake (25g) with yoghurt (60g) and pear (40g) Water (100ml)	Rice cakes (16g) with cottage cheese (20g), apple (20g) and beetroot (20g) Water (100ml)	Wholemeal toast (25g) and spread (4g) with carrot sticks (40g) Whole milk (100ml)
Lunch Planned to provide about 30% of a child's daily energy and nutritional requirements	Fish pie with sweet potato topping (170g) or vegetable and bean pie (v) (170g) with swede and cauliflower (40g) Apple and rhubarb crumble (60g) with custard (60g) Water (100ml)	Beef lasagne (150g) or tomato and lentil lasagne (v) (150g) with garlic bread (25g), carrots and peas (40g) Yoghurt (60g) with dates (25g) Diluted apple juice (100ml)	Roast chicken (35g) and gravy (20g) or roast Quorn™ (35g) and tomato and basil sauce (v) (40g) with roast potatoes (90g), red cabbage and parsnips (40g) Semolina with blackberry compote (125g) Water (100ml)	Mixed bean and root vegetable stew (v) (120g) with apricot and herb cous cous (90g) Cocoa and beetroot cake (50g) with cocoa custard (60g) Diluted orange juice (100ml)	Lamb curry (100g) or chickpea curry (v) (100g) with brown rice (90g), naan bread (20g) and tomato and coriander salad (40g) Warm winter fruit salad (40g) with vanilla sauce (60g) Water (100ml)
Mid-afternoon snack Planned to provide about 10% of a child's daily energy and nutritional requirements	Breadsticks (7g) with hard boiled egg (50g) and cherry tomatoes (40g) Whole milk (100ml)	Oatcake (15g) and satsuma (40g) Water (100ml)	Apple (40g) with crackers (14g) and spread (4g) Whole milk (100ml)	Banana (40g) with plain yoghurt (60g) Water (100ml)	Celery and cucumber sticks (40g) with toasted bagel (50g) and spread (4g) Water (100ml)
Tea Planned to provide about 20% of a child's daily energy and nutritional requirements	Chicken risotto (170g) or Tofu risotto (v) (170g) Seasonal fruit salad (40g) Water (100ml)	Scrambled egg on toast with mushrooms and tomatoes (130g) Banana and raisin flapjack (50g) Water (100ml)	Herby pilchard pasta (210g) or herby tomato and bean pasta (v) (210g) Apple crumble tart (60g) Diluted orange juice (100ml)	Leek, potato and butterbean soup (v) (150g) with wholemeal bread roll (25g) and spread (4g) Stewed seasonal fruit (40g) with plain yoghurt (60g) Water (100ml)	Homemade tuna fishcakes (130g) or potato and lentil cakes (v) (130g) with tomato relish (40g) Banana and cinnamon rice pudding (120g) Water (100ml)

Note: The autumn/winter menu has been developed using the estimated average requirement (EAR) for energy, and the nutrient-based standards for fat, saturated fat, carbohydrate and non-milk extrinsic sugars based on this EAR, as specified by COMA¹³ not the 2011 Dietary Recommendations for Energy published by SACN.⁵⁴

Sizes of plates and bowls

The food and drink guidelines in section 3 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 to visualise them.



←————→
Small bowl: 8cm (actual size)

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



← Large bowl: 12cm (actual size) →

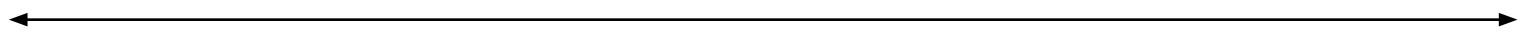


Plate: 20cm (actual size)

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 1 of the Fruit Juices Regulations. ^{****}
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.
Low-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 five 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 2003/1564 The Fruit Juices and Fruit Nectars (England) Regulations 2003.

**** OJ No. L109 6.5.2000, p29; as amended by Commission Directive 2001/101/EC (OJ No. L310, 28.11.2001, p.19).

07

Where to find additional information



Advisory Panel on Food and Nutrition in Early Years
 'Laying the Table: Recommendations for National Food and Nutrition Guidance for Early Years Settings in England'
 Volume 1: Main Report
 Volume 2: Appendices
www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk/apfney



Department of Health
 'Birth to Five' contains information on:

- becoming a parent
- taking care of yourself and your child
- finding practical help and support

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_107303



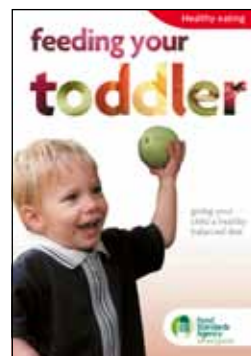
The Caroline Walker Trust
 'Eating well for under 5s in childcare'
www.cwt.org.uk/publications.html#under5



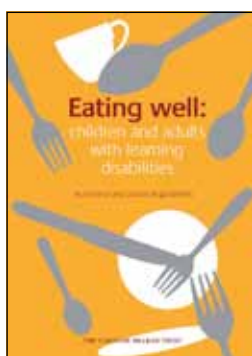
The Food Standards Agency
 'Safer food, better business'
www.sfbtraining.co.uk/



The Caroline Walker Trust
 'Eating well for 1-4 year olds: Practical guide'
www.cwt-chew.org.uk/Pages/1-4.htm



The Food Standards Agency
 'Feeding your toddler'
www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/feedtoddler0310.pdf



The Caroline Walker Trust
 'Eating well: children and adults with learning disabilities'
www.cwt.org.uk/publications.html#ewld



The Caroline Walker Trust
 'Eating well: first year of life'
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- 23 Breastfeeding at study or work; information for employees and employers. Start4Life www.nhs.uk/start4life/Documents/PDFs/407349_C4L_BackToWork_acc.pdf

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- 45 Growing Schools <http://www.growingschools.org.uk/earlyyears/>
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- 52 Caroline Walker Trust (2010) Sustainable Food: A Guide for Early Years Settings www.cwt.org.uk/publications.html#sustain
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The Children's Food Trust

The Children's Food Trust aims to reduce childhood obesity and improve educational performance through improving the food our children eat both in and out of school and in early years settings. We work directly with thousands of schools, millions of parents and with local authorities across the country. We campaign on key issues for school food. We run the UK's biggest network of cooking clubs and, under our previous name of the School Food Trust, we were directly responsible for developing and introducing the national food and nutrition guidelines in both schools and early years settings. We make a difference, and would be pleased to help you too.

Let's Get Cooking

Let's Get Cooking provides training, support and resources for setting up and running healthy cooking activities for people of all ages. Let's Get Cooking is a programme run by the Children's Food Trust.

www.letsgetcooking.org.uk

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