

Healthy eating for children

Information and advice for parents and carers

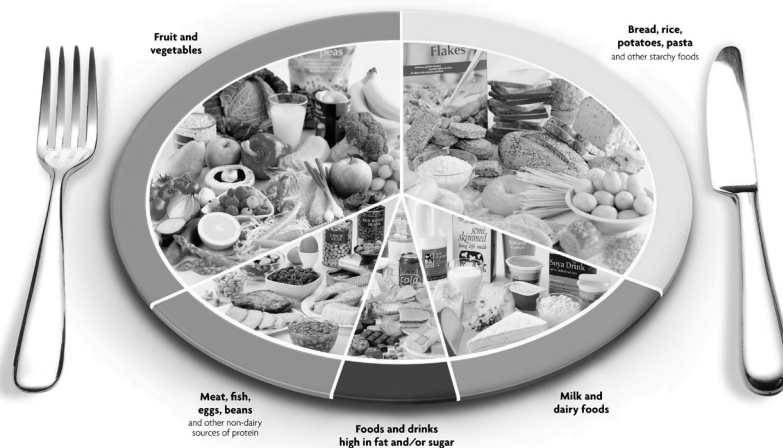
Paediatric Nutrition & Dietetics

What is healthy eating?

Healthy eating means eating the right amounts of a variety of foods. The Eatwell plate below shows the different food groups and what proportion of our diet each of these groups should make up in order for us to be healthy and have a healthy weight:

The eatwell plate

Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



Department of Health in association with the Welsh Government, the Scottish Government and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

Making healthy eating and exercise a normal part of life is the best way you can help your child to maintain or achieve a healthy weight.

Top tips for helping your child to eat healthily

- When you are making healthy changes to your child's diet, involve the whole family, not just the child.
- Set achievable goals, such as reducing chocolate bars to once a week.
- When your child achieves the goals reward them with a sticker or other small reward, but do not use food as a reward.
- Do not aim for drastic weight loss as this can be dangerous for children. Instead it is best to aim to maintain your child's weight, as they increase in height.
- Reduce the amount of freely available money your child has, so they cannot buy junk food outside of your control.
- Don't force your children to finish everything on their plate, let them be guided by their appetite.

It is important to remember that having a healthy lifestyle isn't just about healthy eating; it also involves being active and getting plenty of exercise.

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Meat, fish, eggs and pulses

Foods in this group include:

- Meat
- Poultry
- Fish
- Eggs
- Nuts
- Pulses (beans and lentils)

Eat about 2 portions from this group each day.

How to make healthy choices from this food group:

- Choose lean cuts of meat.
- Remove any visible fat and skin.
- Grill, steam or bake these foods instead of frying.
- If your child eats nuts, choose unsalted nuts instead of salted.
- Pulses are low in fat and high in fibre – use these as an alternative to meat.

Avoid:

- Sausages
- Bacon
- Burgers
- Meat pies
- High fat mince
- Salted nuts

Milk, cheese and yoghurt

Foods in this group include:

- Milk
- Cheese
- Yoghurt and yoghurt drinks
- Cream
- Ice cream
- Custard

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- Fromage frais
- Crème fraiche
- Milk puddings

Eat 2 – 3 servings from this group each day.

1 serving is:

- 1 pint of milk
- 1yoghurt
- 1 – 2oz hard cheese
- 3 – 4oz cottage cheese

How to make healthy choices from this food group:

Try lower fat versions of foods from this group, such as:

- Skimmed or semi-skimmed milk
- Reduced fat/half fat cheese and cheese spreads
- Edam or cottage cheese
- Low calorie/diet/low fat yoghurts or fromage frais

Avoid:

- Jersey, full fat, condensed and evaporated milk
- Cream cheese
- Greek, custard-style or 'thick and creamy' yoghurts

Bread, potatoes and cereals

Foods in this group include:

- Bread
- Potatoes
- Rice
- Pasta
- Cereal

Eat plenty of these and make them the basis of each meal.

How to make healthy choices from this food group:

- Eat boiled, mashed or jacket potatoes more often than chips or roast potatoes.
- If you do eat chips or roast potatoes, cut them thick or try low fat oven chips.

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- Eat a variety of high-fibre breakfast cereals e.g. Bran flakes, Weetabix, Muesli, Fruit 'n' Fibre, Shredded Wheat, All Bran, Shreddies.
- Avoid adding high fat, creamy sauces or butter to these foods. Try reduced fat sauces and dressings or alternative seasonings instead.
- Try to eat wholemeal or wholegrain bread, wholemeal pasta and brown rice which contain more fibre.

Fruit and vegetables

Aim for 5 portions of fruit and vegetables each day.

1 portion is:

- 1 piece of medium fruit e.g. apple, banana, orange.
- 2 pieces of smaller fruits e.g. plums, kiwis, clementines, apricots.
- A cup of tiny fruits e.g. grapes, blackberries, raspberries.
- A small glass of unsweetened fruit juice, not made from concentrate.
- 1 small handful of dried fruit.
- 2 tablespoons of vegetables.
- 1 bowl of salad.

How to make sure your child gets enough fruit and vegetables:

- Try introducing more fruit and vegetables into your child's diet gradually, one extra portion at a time if it seems a lot to manage all at once.
- Fresh, frozen, tinned or dried fruits all count towards your 5 a day.
- Give fruit as a pudding or snack.
- Avoid adding fatty and sugary sauces or dressings to these foods e.g. cream, butter, mayonnaise, ice cream.

Fatty, sugary and salty foods

Foods in this group include:

- Sweets
- Chocolate
- Cakes
- Biscuits
- Puddings
- Crisps
- Packet foods
- Tinned foods

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- Fried foods
- Pastries
- Butter
- Margarine
- Oils
- Mayonnaise-type products

Only have these foods very occasionally.

How to make healthier choices from this food group:

- Use low fat margarine and in small amounts.
- Use vegetable oils in cooking such as olive, sunflower, rapeseed and soya oils.
- Try grilling, baking, boiling or dry-roasting instead of frying.
- Use alternative seasonings to salt e.g. herbs, spices, mustard, garlic, black pepper.
- Do not add salt to food once it is on the plate.
- Limit take-aways to less than once a week.

Drinks

How to make healthy choices:

- Encourage your child to drink plenty of water.
- Limit pure fruit juice to 250ml per day.
- Choose 'not made from concentrate'/'no added sugar' varieties of fruit juice and squashes.
- Choose diet, no added sugar, light or zero sugar squashes and fizzy drinks.
- Use artificial sweeteners rather than sugar in hot drinks.

Exercise

Aim for your child to do 60 minutes of physical activity every day.

How to increase the amount of exercise/physical activity your child does:

- Build physical activity into their daily routine, such as:
 - Walking to school
 - Taking the stairs rather than lifts
 - Walking to the corner shop
- Look for activities that you can do together as a family, such as swimming, walking or cycling.

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- Limit non-physical activities such as watching TV and playing computer games to less than 2 hours a day.

Further information

You can find out more about healthy eating and living from:

Change4life

www.nhs.uk/change4life

NHS Choices Live Well

www.nhs.uk/livewell

British Dietetic Association

www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our websites www.swbh.nhs.uk and www.swbhengage.com, or follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and Facebook www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs.

Sources used for the information in this leaflet

Clinical Paediatric Dietetics (3rd edition), part 4 chapter 27 'Healthy eating', 2007

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5495 or email: swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net



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