



Class Kids

A short guide to healthy eating for primary school age children

Contents

- 1 Introduction – Up, up and away!
- 2 Energy requirements
- 3 It's a balancing act
- 4 Food groups explained
- 6 Nutritious dairy
- 8 Bone health
- 10 Other important nutrients
- 12 Healthy weight
- 14 Let's get physical!
- 15 Activities for children
- 16 Sugar ZAP
- 18 Tremendous teeth
- 19 Nourishing drinks and snacks
- 20 Healthy breakfast
- 22 Packed lunch
- 24 Menu ideas
- 26 Food allergies and Cow's Milk Allergy
- 27 Lactose intolerance
- 28 Veggie kids

Up, up and away!

Kids grow up fast and need to eat nutritious foods that provide energy, vitamins and minerals to support their growth and development. This booklet will explain how you can support those needs.

We will explain why it is important for children to keep active and to join in with energetic play and activities.

At this age, children should be eating family meals, and learning good habits around food at the table. Older ones may be learning how to make their own simple meals and snacks. Later we look at packed lunch and family meal ideas to keep you going throughout the week.

*This guide will
help you to
support their
growing needs.*

Energy requirements

Energy is essential for growth and development in children. Calories from fat, carbohydrate and protein provide the energy that children need to fuel themselves as they grow, learn and play.

How many calories does my child need?

To meet adult energy requirements, mums need about 2000 calories* per day, and dads need 2500 calories*. The amount a primary school child needs depends on their age and stage in development, the current recommendations are shown in the table below:

	5-6 years		7-10 years		11-14 years	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Energy	1482	1378	1817	1703	2500	2000
	kcal	kcal	kcal	kcal	kcal	kcal

Don't eat too much!

Having more food (or calories) than needed can lead to unwanted weight gain and body fat. See page 12 about maintaining a healthy weight.

*Food packaging usually refers to calories as kcal (the scientific abbreviation for calories)



It's a balancing act

Primary school children are all growing at different rates and are in different stages of development. So it's important for them to have a nutritious diet with balanced meals, and healthy snacks and drinks in between.

Go for a variety of different foods

A **balanced meal** will help provide the right amount of starchy carbohydrates, protein, fibre, vitamins and minerals to support growth and development.

Choosing a variety of different foods at each meal will provide a variety of nutrients across the day that children need for growth and development and good health. Sticking to the same foods all of the time can limit nutrient intakes.

Try to balance meals by serving a variety of foods from the food groups shown on the next few pages. As well as having a good balance, consider portion sizes to help your family stay trim.



Food groups explained

Food group	Examples	Quantity	Key nutrients	Tips
Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates	Bread, rolls, chapatis, naans Breakfast cereals Potatoes, yams Rice, pasta, noodles Couscous, quinoa and other grains Flours (wheat, rice, or potato flour etc)	Make these the main part of every meal and one of their daily snacks	Carbohydrate Thiamin (B1) Folate Fibre (wholegrain varieties) Sometimes these foods are fortified with other nutrients such as iron.	Go for a mixture of white, brown and wholegrain varieties of bread, rice, pasta or grains. Having fruit or fruit juice with breakfast can help our body absorb more iron from cereals.
Fruit & vegetables	All types of fresh, frozen and tinned (in natural juice) Dried fruit (with meals but not as a snack as some can be high in sugar)	At least 5 portions a day (a portion is about 80g or 1 piece of fruit or 2 tablespoons of chopped vegetables)	Vitamins and minerals – especially vitamin C Beta-carotene Fibre Folate Potassium Calcium	If you use tinned fruit or vegetables go for the ones in natural juices rather than in syrup or salty water. Leafy vegetables & dried fruit provide small amounts of iron – try adding them to recipes for that extra bit of help!
Milk, cheese and yogurt	Milk Hard cheese e.g. cheddar Soft cheese Yogurt, fromage frais Dairy-based desserts such as custard, milk pudding or rice pudding	Around 2-3 portions per day will provide enough iodine and calcium to meet recommendations (a portion is a small pot of yogurt, 20g-30g of cheese, or a glass or carton of milk)	Protein Calcium Phosphorus Iodine B vitamins	Milk is very versatile and can be added to puddings, sauces and soups. Try yogurt as a snack, pudding or as part of a recipe such as a mild curry.
Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins	Red meat – beef, lamb, pork Poultry – chicken, turkey Fish & seafood – tuna, cod, salmon, haddock, prawns Eggs Nuts, seeds, beans, lentils Tofu, soya beans, quorn	Around 2 servings each day with meals or as part of a snack - Vegetarians should have 2-3 servings per day Aim for 2 portions of fish a week, including one portion of oily fish	Protein Iron Zinc B vitamins Iodine Vitamin A	Go for lean meat and mince. Cut the fat off meat and skin off chicken. Grill rather than fry these foods.

Nutritious dairy

Milk, cheese and yogurt are nutrient-rich providing a wide range of nutrients including protein, calcium, phosphorus, vitamin B12, B2 (riboflavin) and iodine.

Protein

Needed for growth and development of bone, helps maintain muscles

Calcium

Needed for growth and development of bone, helps maintain teeth

Vitamin D*

(*vitamin D is only found in significant amounts in fortified foods such as fortified yogurt)

Needed for growth and development of bone, contributes to the function of the immune system

Phosphorus

Needed for growth and development of bone

Iodine

Needed for growth in children, contributes to normal cognitive function



A child-sized carton (189ml) portion of semi-skimmed milk provides:

Recommended intake of:	For 4-6 year-olds*	For 7-10 year-olds*
Protein	35%	24%
Riboflavin	59%	47%
Potassium	28%	15%
Calcium	52%	42%
Phosphorus	52%	41%
Iodine	59%	53%

*based on current government recommended nutrient intakes for children

Bone health

Bone is a living tissue, continuously growing and remodelling itself. The main minerals found in bone are calcium and phosphorus. But other nutrients such as vitamin D and protein are also important. And don't forget exercise, it helps to keep bones strong!

Children need varying amounts of calcium and phosphorus in their diet according to their age and stage of development. Requirements for calcium, phosphorus and protein become greater as the skeleton grows in length and strength, and bone structure hardens.

Milk and dairy products are an important dietary source of calcium and phosphorus. Milk, cheese and yogurt provide:

Calcium, phosphorus and protein which are needed for normal growth and development of bones in children



Other important nutrients

Iron

It's important to give young children some iron-containing food every day. Iron helps to make red blood cells and is needed for healthy growth. Too little iron can lead to iron deficiency, which may affect growth and development.

Meat, especially red meat, and some oily fish provide iron and zinc to the diet.

The iron in pulses and bread is not absorbed by the body as well as it is from meat.

Vitamin C rich foods (e.g. citrus fruit, peppers and some types of leafy green vegetables) can help increase absorption of iron so it's a good idea to include some of these in the same meal. For example, slices of orange, strawberries or kiwi fruit at breakfast time will help make the most of the iron in cereal or toast.

Zinc

Zinc is important for making new cells and enzymes, processing carbohydrate, fat and protein in food, and for wound healing. Good sources of zinc include meat, shellfish, bread, and cereal products.

Vitamin D

Recently, the government recommended that everyone over the age of one year living in the UK should take a vitamin D supplement of 10µg (micrograms) during the winter months, from October to March.

We tend to get most of our vitamin D from the sunlight but it can be found in fortified foods, such as some dairy products and cereals, and is found naturally in small amounts in eggs, oily fish and liver.

Seek further advice about supplements from your GP or health professional.



Healthy weight

To help children maintain a healthy weight, it is important to encourage them to:

- Eat a balanced and varied diet
- Participate in physical activity every day

If your child is overweight it is important to seek specialist advice from your GP or school nurse. They may recommend a Lifestyle Weight Management Programme - which will encourage physical activity and good habits around food.

Children should not be put on a calorie restricted diet as this approach may interfere with their growth and development.



Let's get physical!

Children should do at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day

Regular exercise can help prevent children from becoming overweight.

They don't have to do activities for 60 minutes in one go - it can be split into 10 minute sessions across the day too!

Activities should range between moderate-intensity activities, such as cycling or playground games, and vigorous-intensity activities, such as fast running or tennis.

Muscle-strengthening activities, such as push-ups, and bone-strengthening activities, such as running, are also important and should be encouraged at least three days per week. Most vigorous-intensity activities also promote bone-strengthening.

Physical activity...

has a positive impact on physical health

promotes a healthy body image

promotes a healthy body weight

has a positive impact on mental health

Activities for children

Moderate-intensity activities

- Cycling
- Dancing
- Horse riding
- Trampolining
- Roller skating
- Interactive games
- Playground games
- Walking/cycling to school

Vigorous-intensity activities

- Football
- Aerobics
- Basketball
- Swimming
- Hill walking
- Gymnastics
- Fast running
- Skipping rope games

Muscle-strengthening activities

- Sit ups
- Swinging
- Push ups
- Tug of war
- Gymnastics
- Squat jumps
- Rope/tree climbing
- Cross-country running
- Climbing frame/Monkey bars

Bone-strengthening activities

- Tennis
- Running
- Skipping
- Hopping
- Jumping
- Volleyball
- Basketball
- Gymnastics
- Skipping rope games

Sugar ZAP

In a bid to reduce obesity and dental decay in children, the government recently changed their guidelines around how much sugar children should consume.

Guidelines recommend less than 5% of our total energy intake should come from free sugars.

Free sugars and syrups are the type of sugars that are added to some foods during processing or cooking.

Naturally occurring sugars in their whole food form, such as lactose in milk, or sugar in whole fruit, are not included in the sugar reduction message.

Children aged 4-6 years should have no more than 19g (4 3/4 tsp) per day and children aged 7-11 years should have no more than 24g (6 tsp) per day. A level teaspoon of sugar weighs 4g.

The amount of added sugar in some of children's favourite snacks and drinks is shown below:

330ml Can fizzy drink
9 teaspoons (35g)

45g Chocolate bar
5 teaspoons (21g)

16g Fun-size pack
jelly sweets
2 teaspoons (8.5g)

Ketchup sachet
1/2 teaspoon (2.5g)

Small cookie
1 1/2 teaspoons (6g)



Watch out for salt too!

Some children's foods are high in salt. Children aged 4-6 years should have no more than 3g, and children aged 7-11 years should have no more than 5g, per day.

Tremendous teeth

It's important for children to learn how to take care of their teeth properly. Regular brushing and visits to the dentist are important.

Eating certain foods, such as sugary foods and drinks, too often, or not brushing teeth properly, can lead to a build-up of bacteria in our mouth. Some of these bacteria produce acid that attack our teeth which can lead to tooth decay.

It's not just the amount of sugar eaten, but how often it is consumed too. The more often children have sugary foods or drinks, the more likely they are to develop dental problems.



*Try to keep
sugary foods
and drinks to
mealtimes only*

Nourishing drinks and snacks

HEALTHY SNACKS INCLUDE:

- Cheese
- Raw vegetable sticks with dips
- Plain or low-sugar yogurt and fromage frais
- Fruit
- Toast, breadsticks, crumpets and other starchy carbohydrates
- Mini sandwich rolls
- Fruit bread or malt loaf
- Homemade plain popcorn

HEALTHY DRINKS INCLUDE:

- Water
- Milk



Healthy breakfast

Breakfast is the first meal of the day and can keep us going until mid-morning or even lunchtime. It can provide children with a range of nutrients; breakfast eaters usually have a better intake of vitamins, minerals and fibre than breakfast skippers. However, about half of children's recommended daily intake of sugar comes from their breakfast.

Healthy breakfast cereals include:

- Porridge
- Wheat bisk
- Crisped rice
- Cornflakes

Try to limit:

- Chocolate coated cereal
- Honey coated or frosted cereal

Watch out for some types of granola as these can be high in added sugars or syrups.

Cereals aimed at children can be high in added sugars. Always check the label!



Packed lunch

Some schools have strict guidelines around what can and cannot be included in a packed lunch box. It's best to find out from your school what they are.

To help you make healthy choices, we have outlined a quick mix and match selection below, choose an item from each section of the table:



Starchy carbohydrates	Filling	Sides	Dessert	Drink
Bread, bagels, wraps & rolls	Cheese & tomato	Carrot sticks	Fruit	Milk
Breadsticks, crackers, savoury biscuits	Soft cheese & cucumber	Red peppers	Yogurt	Water
Rice, potato or couscous salad	Ham, beef or chicken	Cucumber	Custard	Sugar-free squash or juice drink
	Tuna mayonnaise	Tomato	Rice pudding	
	Egg	Salad		
	Mashed avocado	Boiled egg		

Menu ideas

The menu below provides some ideas for family meals and healthy snacks.

Food group	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Breakfast	2 wheat bisks with milk and dried fruit 1 Slice of buttered toast Small glass of orange juice	Small bowl of low-sugar granola with plain yogurt and berry compote Small glass of water	Scrambled egg wrap with tomato wedges Small pot low-sugar yogurt Small glass of milk	Bagel with soft cheese Apple wedges Small glass of apple juice	Small bowl of porridge (made with milk) topped with banana slices Small glass water
Morning snack	Apple Small glass of milk	Carrot sticks Small glass of milk	Banana Small glass of water	Cherry tomatoes Small glass of milk	2 plums Small glass of milk
Lunch (serve with water)	Chicken fajitas with sweetcorn	Tuna pasta bake with green salad	Lamb and aubergine pie with green beans	Grilled beef sausage with mash and baked beans	Vegetable curry with tomato salad
Dessert	Eton mess	Fruit mousse	Raspberry cheese cake	Forest fruits crumble with custard	Crepe with fresh fruit
Afternoon snack (serve with water)	½ cheese scone with grapes	2 slices of malt loaf with a satsuma	Fish pate with rice cakes and cucumber	Breadsticks with dips	Soft cheese and toast fingers with red pepper sticks
Tea (serve with water)	Vegetable frittata with salad Plain yogurt with fresh fruit	Leek and Wensleydale pine nut tart with salad Orange wedges	Ham and cheese toastie with side salad Tinned fruit salad	Lentil soup with soft roll Baked pear with plain yogurt	Cod fish cakes with carrot salad Melon slices

Allergies and Cow's Milk Allergy

Food allergies and intolerances tend to be quite rare, however, those who have them may need to avoid or limit certain foods from their diet.

The most commonly known food allergies include:

- fish and seafood
- celery
- tree nuts
- mustard
- peanuts
- sesame seeds
- gluten (cereals)
- soya beans
- eggs
- milk

Cow's Milk Allergy

Milk allergy causes a serious reaction, and occurs when the body's immune system reacts inappropriately to a protein found in milk. Children who are allergic to milk should avoid all cow's milk and dairy products. However, milk allergy is not as common as people think – it affects 1 in 50 infants, and is less common in older children. Many children outgrow their milk allergy before starting school.

Neither goat's or sheep's milk are a suitable replacement for cow's milk; your child's body may react to the protein in the same way as it does to cow's milk protein.

Soya products should only be used if advised by a GP or Registered Dietitian, as children who are allergic to cow's milk may also be allergic to soya.

Lactose intolerance

Like milk allergy, lactose intolerance in the UK is not as common as people think – it affects about 2-5% of Northern Europeans. It tends to be higher in other ethnic groups such as African, African Caribbean and Chinese. It affects adults more often than children. People with lactose intolerance do not need to avoid all dairy products since many with the condition can tolerate small amounts of lactose. Dairy products contain varying amounts of lactose, hard cheeses contain very little, if any, lactose. Lactose free milk, cheese and yogurt are available in most supermarkets.

Baking or cooking milk before eating it may also help reduce symptoms.

Lactase supplements are sometimes prescribed to help aid lactose digestion and reduce symptoms. In some cases, under supervision, gradually introducing lactose-containing foods to the diet improves lactose tolerance.

Always seek advice from a GP or Registered Dietitian if you think your child has an allergy or intolerance

Veggie kids

A carefully planned vegetarian diet can provide all of the nutrients that a growing child needs, however, some care should be taken around some nutrients that are mainly found in animal foods such as iron, zinc, iodine and vitamin B12.

Milk and dairy foods are good source of B12 and iodine for vegetarians – which can be difficult to obtain from other foods associated with a vegetarian diet.

Good sources of iron and zinc for vegetarians include eggs, pulses and legumes, and meat alternatives such as tofu, soya and quorn.

Vegan children may need specialist advice from a dietitian to ensure they are getting all of the nutrients that they need for growth and development.

If you are worried about your child not eating well chat to a GP or Registered Dietitian for further advice



Information sources

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NHS Choices. Vitamin D <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d/> [accessed 03/2018]

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NHS Choices. Children's teeth <https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/dentalhealth/Pages/Careofkidsteeth.aspx> [accessed 03/2018]

NHS Choices. Allergies <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Allergies/> [accessed 03/2018]

NHS Choices. Healthy eating for vegetarians and vegans <https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Vegetarianhealth/Pages/Goingvegetarian.aspx> [accessed 03/2018]



For details on additional information sources please contact The Dairy Council

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