



Feeding children aged 1-4 years





A guide for parents and carers



Feeding children aged 1-4 years

Children aged 1-4 years 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 that their meals and snacks contain all the nutrients they need. You can do this by providing a variety of food from each of the following food groups over the day:

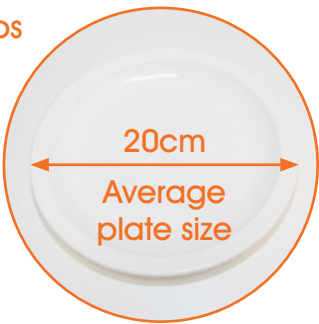
- **Starchy food such as bread, potatoes, rice, pasta**
- **Meat, fish, eggs, beans, lentils**
- **Vegetables and fruit**
- **Milk and dairy foods**

Food groups		Recommended portions
Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods		Serve at each meal and some snacks
Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein		2 portions a day
Fruit and vegetables		Serve at each meal and some snacks
Milk and dairy		3 portions each day

The wider the variety of foods eaten within each food

Encouraging children to eat well and learn about food in the early years not only protects their health when they are young, but also sets the foundations for their future health and wellbeing.

The table below is a guide to the food groups and the number of portions from each group children 1-4 years need every day to meet these nutritional requirements. The food pictures used in this resource - show average servings for a child aged 1-4 years. They are suitable for most children although some will need more and some will need less.



	Food included	Main nutrients
	Bread, chapati, breakfast cereals, rice, couscous, pasta, millet, potatoes, yam, and foods made with flour such as pizza bases, buns, pancakes	Carbohydrate, B Vitamins, Fibre, Some Iron, Zinc, Calcium
	Meat, fish, eggs, nuts and pulses e.g. lentils, dhal, chick peas, humous, kidney beans and other similar Quorn™, Tofu	Iron, Protein, Zinc, Magnesium, B Vitamins, Vitamin A, Omega 3, Omega 3 long chain fatty acids: EPA and DHA from oily fish
	Fresh, frozen, tinned and dried fruits and vegetables	Vitamin C, Carotenes which are a form of Vitamin A, Fibre, Zinc, Iron
	Cows milk, goats milk, yoghurts, cheese, calcium enriched soy milks and desserts	Calcium, Phosphorus, Protein Iodine, Riboflavin

Starchy foods

Why is this group important?

- Provides energy, carbohydrates, fibre and B vitamins
- Fortified breakfast cereals can also be a good source of iron

How much do children 1-4 years need?

- Include one serving of starchy food at each meal and one snack time every day
- Try to include different foods from this group over the week

Average portion sizes



Porridge



Bisk wheats



Puffed rice



Malted wheats



Bread



Pitta

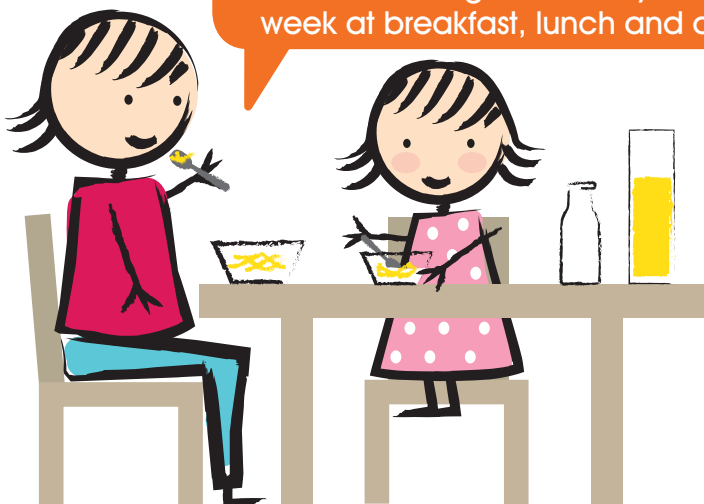


Naan



Bagel

- Avoid sugar or chocolate coated breakfast cereals
- Limit starchy foods that have been fried to maximum of twice a week
- Avoid flavoured dried rice, pasta and noodle products, as these can be high in salt
- Include wholegrain starchy foods at least once a week at breakfast, lunch and at tea



Pasta



Rice



Noodles



Couscous



Boiled potatoes



Jacket potato



Mashed sweet potato



Boiled yam

Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy

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.

Foods from this group provide protein, iron and zinc.

Oily fish provides omega-3-fatty acids, vitamin A and vitamin D.

How much do children 1-4 years need?

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.

Average portion sizes



Chicken



Ham



Pork



Beef mince



White fish



Salmon

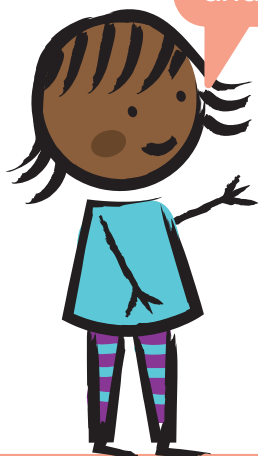


Tuna



Sardines

Meat and fish products, and products made from meat alternatives can be high in salt and saturated fat. Making homemade versions can ensure that the fat and salt content is lower



Food safety

Make sure fish dishes are bone free

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

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

Ensure any eggs, meat, fish and shellfish is well cooked



Quorn™



Soya mince



Mixed beans



Peanut butter



Falafel



Humous



Scrambled eggs



Omelette

Fruit and Vegetables

What does this food group include?

All fruit and vegetables including those that are fresh, frozen, canned, dried or juiced.

How much do children 1-4 years need?

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

Children should have **five portions** of fruit and vegetables each day, provide a variety of foods from this food group.

Average portion sizes



Banana



Clementine



Strawberries



Grapes



Melon



Pineapple



Raisins



Fruit in juice



- Choose canned vegetables and pulses without added salt and sugar
- Choose fruit canned in natural juice without added salt and sugar
- Choose reduced salt and sugar baked beans

Food safety

Remember to:

- wash fruit and vegetables
- removing any stones or pips
- cut in half small fruits such as grapes and cherry tomatoes



Swede



Pepper



Carrots



Mixed salad



Sweetcorn



Peas



Broccoli



Mixed vegetables

Milk and dairy foods

What does this food group include?

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

This group includes, milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais, custard, puddings made from milk, milk-based sauces.

How much do children 1-4 years need?

Children should have three portions of milk and dairy foods each day, from meals, snacks and drinks.

Average portion sizes



**Cheddar
cheese**



**Edam
cheese**



Soft cheese



**Cottage
cheese**



Yogurt



Custard



**Milk on
cereal**



Milk

Which milk and dairy products should be provided?

Children under 2 years should only have full fat milk and dairy foods. Semi-skimmed milk can be introduced from 2 years if they are growing well.

Use full-fat yoghurts, fromage frais, cheese and cream-cheese.

- Choose yoghurt and fromage frais with a lower sugar content
- Avoid ice cream and sweetened frozen yoghurt between meals, only offer at meal times

Alternative milks such as goat's, sheep's or unsweetened soya milk can be used as a non-dairy alternative to cow's milk for children over 1 year - choose calcium enriched varieties.



Food safety

Avoid unpasteurised dairy products as they may cause food poisoning

Drinks

- Water and milk are the best drinks for children
- An open cup is best to use for children's teeth, avoid valved cups and sports top bottles
- Avoid all squashes and fizzy drinks even if labelled 'sugar-free', 'no added sugar' or 'reduced sugar' these have little nutritional value and contribute to tooth decay



Open cup



Lidded cup



Water



Milk



Planning meals and snacks for your child

Children 1-5 years have small stomachs but high energy and nutrient needs. Therefore should be offered food at three meals (breakfast, lunch and tea) and two snack times every day.

Mealtimes should be happy social times for you to enjoy together.

Top tips for healthy children

- Whenever you can all eat together
- Allow plenty of time for a meals but not let meals go on too long
- Encourage children to feed themselves



Planning meal times

The key to healthy eating is variety, as eating a wider range of different foods provides a better balance of nutrients. Planning meals and snacks that include a variety of food and drinks from the four food groups each day will provide children with the good balance of nutrients they need. On the next few pages there are lots of ideas for meal and snack times.

Breakfast ideas



**Malted
wheats with
milk**



**Eggy bread
with fruit**



**Porridge
and fruit
puree**

Snack ideas (mid-afternoon)



**Cheese,
grapes and
rice cakes**



**Peanut
butter and
toast**



Mixed fruit

- **Breakfast**
- **Mid-morning snack**
- **Lunch**
(main course and dessert)
- **Mid-afternoon snack**
- **Tea**
(main course and dessert)



**Scrambled
egg and
muffin**



**Multigrain
loops with
milk**



**Porridge
with raisins**



**Puffed rice
with milk**



**Cheese on
toast with
vegetables**



**Rice cake
with cheese
and fruit**



Mixed fruit



**Sardine pate,
pitta and
vegetables**

Lunch

At lunch remember to offer a main course and a dessert



Fish goujons, peas and sweet potato



Lamb tagine and couscous



Falafels, salad and pitta



Fruit and jelly



Rice pudding and custard



Fresh fruit puree

Snack ideas (mid-afternoon)



Rice cakes and veg dips



Sardine pate and mixed vegetables



Rice cakes, cheese and veg



Roast chicken dinner



Fish pie and green beans



Roasted veg, cheese and pasta



Lentil dahl and pitta



Eve's pudding and custard



Fresh fruit salad



Baked apple and custard



Oat biscuit



Vegetables and cheese sticks



Pea dip and breadsticks



Fruit and yoghurt



Carrot dip and toast

Tea ideas

At tea remember to offer a main course and a dessert



Chicken, peas and sweet potato



Ham sandwich with salad



Jacket potato and beans



Fruit and yoghurt



Chocolate sponge and custard



Fruit crumble and custard





**Spanish
omelette
green beans**



**Pasta
bolognese**



**Chickpea
curry
and naan**



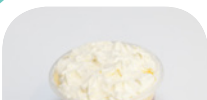
**Sausages,
peas and
sweet potato**



**Pineapple
upside down
cake**



Flapjack



Trifle



**Fruit cocktail
and custard**



Vegetarians

It is important that meals for vegetarian children are planned so that they have a wide range of foods to meet their nutritional needs. To ensure that young children who are vegetarian have sufficient iron and zinc, provide meals and snacks containing good sources of these nutrients.

Top tips for healthy children

- All lunches and teas 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
- Make sure you provide vegetables or fruit with meals as the vitamin C will help to increase the absorption of iron

Average portion sizes



Dried apricots



Spinach



Quorn



Soya mince



Mixed beans



Wholegrain cereal



Peanut butter



Falafels

Cooking with children

Cooking with children is both an enjoyable activity and an effective way of encouraging all children to try a wide range of foods. There are many easy, tasty dishes that children can help to prepare.



Enjoy cooking and preparing tasty food together.

Fussy eaters

Simple strategies to support parents and carers with children who are fussy eaters

Young children can be fussy about what they eat, or how they eat. Fussy eating and fear of new foods are part of development and affect some children under five. It is often a phase that typically starts between 18 months and two years. Fussy eating and fear of new foods can both be helped using similar techniques. It is important that the approach you take are consistent and it is essential that all those involved at mealtimes (parents, carers and grandparents) follow the same strategies.

Rewards

- Praise children for trying new foods
- 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

Exposure

- Give your child regular and repeated chances to taste new foods – it may take as many as 10 to 15 tastings before it is accepted

Drinks can interfere with appetite, therefore it is important to think about how and when you offer children drinks. Children need between about 6 to 8 cups of fluid per day. If your child drinks too much it can affect their appetite. Offer drinks:

- In a free-flowing lidded or open beaker as they are less likely to comfort feed
- After food at meal times



Top tips for happy meals

- Plan meals and snacks so they eat regularly between meals over the day this will allow them time to build up appetite
- Eating together helps develop social skills and good eating habits, where possible eat with your child
- Use appropriate size cutlery, plates, and cups this will help your child eat independently
- Present food in fun and appealing way
- Areas for eating should be free from distractions such as television or toys
- Allow enough time for your child eat, however do not let meals drag on for too long



If you have further questions or need more help ask your Health Visitor or GP for support.

Health Visiting Team

Children's Centre

If you would like this booklet in another language, Braille, audio tape, large print, easy English, BSL video or computer disk please contact us on **0845 129 7217**.

