



# 5532 a-day

## Perfect portions for little tumms (1-4 years)

Your guide to feeding your child a healthy, varied and balanced diet to give them all they need to grow and be healthy.

Did you know that healthy eating habits developed in the early years can set a child up for good health in later life?

Children need a diet made up of foods from the 4 main food groups, in the right balance and in portion sizes just right for them.

Your child will need about this number of portions across the day from each food group:

**Starchy Foods x 5-a-day**

**Fruit & Vegetables x 5-a-day (or more)**

**Dairy Foods x 3-a-day**

**Protein Foods x 2-a-day\***

**= 5532-a-day**

\*3 Portions if child is vegetarian.



“

Children's appetites vary from day to day – this leaflet gives examples of the portion sizes to offer, but let your child decide how much to eat.

”

Sara Stanner, British Nutrition Foundation

This handy guide is packed with helpful guidance, advice and tips on how you can help your preschool child get a healthy diet with all the nutrients they need. It includes portion size information across a wide variety of foods.

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# Starchy Foods

**5**  
a-day

One portion of these foods should be offered at each meal and at some snack times. Provide a mixture of white and wholegrain foods (e.g. wholemeal bread) and choose fortified versions (e.g. some breakfast cereals) where possible.

Limit sweetened versions (e.g. sugary cereals, scones, scotch pancakes) where possible.

Children who eat well may eat 2 portions of starchy foods at mealtimes and so won't need them at snack times.

**See opposite for examples of portion sizes.**



½-1 bread slice



2-4 potato wedges



½-1 scone



½-1 chapati



¼-½ pitta bread



5-8 tbsp porridge



3-6 tbsp breakfast cereal



1-2 oat cakes



1-3 plain breadsticks



2-5 tbsp cooked pasta



2-5 tbsp cooked rice



2-4 tbsp cooked couscous



½-1 small cup of noodles



½ - 1 ½ egg-sized boiled potatoes



½-1 scotch pancake



1-3 tablespoons plantain



¼-½ baked medium potato



2-4 tbsp canned spaghetti hoops

“ Meals for children should be based on starchy foods, which provide energy, vitamins, minerals and fibre. Starchy foods like oatcakes, breadsticks and fingers of toast can also make healthy snacks. ”

Sara Stanner, British Nutrition Foundation

# Fruit & Vegetables

# 5

a-day  
(or more)



Serve at least one portion at each meal and at some snack times and try to include a variety of different types. Children can eat larger portions if they wish. Fresh, frozen, canned and dried varieties all count. Because dried fruit and products made from dried fruit can stick to teeth it's better to have them as part of a meal and not a between-meal snack.

See opposite for examples of portion sizes.



1/4-1/2 medium apple



1/4-1 medium banana



1/4-1/2 medium mango



1/4-1/2 medium orange



1/4-1/2 peach



1/4-1/2 medium pear



1/2-1 clementine



1/2-1 plum



1/2-1 apricot



3-10 grapes (halved)



3-10 raspberries



3-10 blueberries



3-10 strawberries



1/2-2 tbsp cooked swede



1/2-2 tbsp cooked broccoli or cauliflower



1/2-2 tbsp sweet potato



2-6 carrot sticks



1/2-2 tbsp roasted vegetables



1-3 cherry tomatoes



1/2-2 tbsp cooked greens



1/2-2 tbsp cooked beans



1/2-2 tbsp cooked sweetcorn



1/2-2 tbsp cooked peas



1/2-2 tbsp cooked courgettes



1-3 button mushrooms



1/2-2 tbsp avocado



1/2-2 tbsp okra



1/2-2 tbsp stir fried mixed vegetables



1/2-1 small bowl homemade veg soup



1/2-2 tbsp cooked spinach



2-4 tbsp canned fruit in juice



1-3 dried apricots



1-3 dates



1-3 dried figs



1/2-2 tbsp of sultanas

# Dairy Foods

# 3 a-day

Serve 3 portions a day. Children under 2 years should have whole milk or yogurt. Choose plain, unsweetened or lower sugar versions of yogurt where possible. Those eating well can be given semi-skimmed milk after 2 years. Skimmed or 1% milk is not suitable as a drink for children under 5. Non-dairy milk alternatives should be unsweetened and fortified with calcium and ideally other minerals (e.g iodine) and vitamins. Rice milk is not suitable for young children. It may be a good idea to talk to your GP about diet and supplementation if you are not offering any dairy foods as these are important sources of vitamin A, calcium, iodine and riboflavin.

See opposite for examples of portion sizes.



100-120ml cow's milk, breastmilk or formula as a drink



1-3 tbsp cheese sauce e.g. with cooked veg



½-1 tbsp cottage cheese



3 tbsp plain yogurt



1 cheese ball



2-4 tbsp rice pudding



2-4 tbsp grated cheese



1-3 tbsp yogurt dip



1 pot (125ml) of yogurt



2 small pots (60ml each) fromage frais



1 pot (120g) soya-based dessert (with calcium)



5-7 tbsp dairy dessert e.g. custard

# “

Milk and dairy foods provide protein and essential nutrients like calcium for healthy bones and teeth, and B vitamins for energy.

# ”

Sara Stanner, British Nutrition Foundation

# Protein Foods

# 2 a-day

Serve 2-3 portions a day (3 for a vegetarian child). Fish should be served at least twice a week and one of these should be oily fish e.g. salmon, sardines, mackerel, trout. It's a good idea to limit how often you give processed meat (e.g. sausages, ham). It's important that young children get enough iron - sources of iron in this group include red meat, pulses, ground nuts or nut butters and seeds.

**See opposite for examples of portion sizes.**

For more about vegetarian diets see page 18.



1-3 cocktail sausages



1/2-1 slice of beef



2-4 tbsp dhal



1/2-2 small slices of pork



1/2-2 small slices of chicken or turkey



1/4-1 burger



1/4-1 small fillet cod or haddock



1/4-1 small fillet salmon



1/2-2 tbsp prawns



1-2 fish fingers



1/2-1 1/2 tbsp tinned tuna



1/2-1 1/2 tbsp tinned salmon



1/2-1 1/2 tbsp tinned sardines



1-2 tbsp houmous



1/2-1 boiled egg



1/2-1 fried egg



2-4 tbsp scrambled egg



Peanut butter on bread/toast



1-2 tbsp chopped or ground nuts



2-4 tbsp cooked chickpeas



2-4 tbsp cooked kidney beans



2-4 tbsp cooked mincemeat eg. bolognese sauce



2-4 tbsp lentils



2-4 tbsp baked beans



## Meal times

Try to have regular meal and snack times each day.

**Offer your child a healthy, varied diet from the 4 main food groups at meal and snack times, all served in appropriate portion sizes.**

Include your child in family meal times.

**Involve your child, as much as is safe to do so, in food preparation and make meals as colourful, interesting and enjoyable as possible.**

Children's food preferences vary from day to day so keep offering your child new foods, alongside familiar favourites.

**Let your child use cutlery to feed themselves as this can help them develop their fine motor skills.**

Encourage your child to feed themselves with finger foods such as breadsticks, bits of pitta bread, fingers of toast, vegetable sticks, chopped up fruit, small sandwiches, small sausages or fish fingers.

**Most young children can regulate their own appetite so encourage them to eat but do not force them or expect them to eat if they are not hungry.**

Some children eat slowly, but generally will have eaten all they are likely to eat within 20-30 minutes so meals don't need to be longer than this.

**ALWAYS offer water or plain milk with mealtimes** \*

# Meal Occasions

### TOP TIP

*Encourage eating opportunities with other children as young children will often accept new foods if they see their friends eating them.*

## Snacks


**Offer your child a small, healthy snack 2 to 3 times a day e.g. one mid-morning, one mid-afternoon and maybe one before bedtime. This will allow an opportunity other than meal times to provide important nutrients.**

Snack time is also a good time to offer a drink.

### Healthy snacks

- Pieces of fresh fruit e.g. apple, banana, grapes, pear, satsuma.
- Toast or bread sticks with peanut butter, cream cheese, houmous or tuna pâté.
- Cheese with crackers, oatcakes, unsalted rice cakes or chapati.
- Bagel, English muffin, teacake, or bread with spread.
- Fromage frais/yogurt with fruit slices.





Offer your child 6-8 cups or beakers (about 150-200ml a serving) of drinks a day with meals and at snack times.

Children of this age shouldn't use a feeding bottle for drinks. A free-flow cup can be used and, as soon as they are ready, move on to an open lidded cup.

### TOP TIP

*Tap water is a good choice and should always be made available throughout the day.*

# Drinks

Fruit juice provides some nutrients but is also high in sugar and is acidic, so, if consumed should be diluted (one part juice to ten parts water) and kept to mealtimes.

**Avoid sugar-sweetened and fizzy drinks as these can fill children up and reduce their appetite at meal times. Sugary and fizzy drinks can also damage a child's teeth if they aren't brushed regularly.**

Milk is a good choice for drinks as it provides calcium and other important nutrients. Children under 2 years should have whole milk and you can continue to give children whole milk, which is a good source of vitamin A. Those eating well can be given semi-skimmed milk after 2 years. Skimmed or 1% milk is not suitable for children under 5.

## Breast feeding

Children aged 1-2 years will be getting most of the nutrients they need from solid food but breast feeding can continue alongside this. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends breast feeding alongside food for up to two years and beyond. Breast milk can contribute to intakes from the dairy food group (see page 9).

**Tea and coffee are NOT SUITABLE FOR PRE SCHOOL CHILDREN as they contain caffeine and can reduce the amount of iron absorbed from food, especially if they're given with meals.**

## Fats and Oils

Your child needs some fat in their diet from foods such as whole milk and other full fat dairy foods, oily fish, spreads and some vegetable oils. These provide other important nutrients in the diet as well.

Unsaturated fats like rapeseed oil (often labelled as vegetable oil), olive oil and spreads made from these can be used for cooking and spreading on bread. Fats and oils provide essential fatty acids and fat-soluble vitamins that are important for children's growth and development and so it's important to include them in small amounts. However, limit high fat foods like cakes, biscuits and fried foods.



## Vegetarian diets

**Well-planned vegetarian diets can be healthy for young children. It is important that vegetarian children get 3 portions a day from the 'protein foods' group to make sure that they get enough of nutrients like iron and zinc.**

If you are considering a vegan diet for your child then it is a good idea to visit your GP to ask for advice about supplementation as it can be difficult for young children to get enough vitamins A and B12, riboflavin, iron, zinc, calcium and iodine from a vegan diet. This is also advised if you are not offering any dairy foods as these are important sources of calcium, iodine and riboflavin.

## Supplements

Children from 6 months to 5 years, including those who are breast fed or consuming less than 500ml of formula milk per day, should be given supplements of vitamins A, C and D.

**Vitamin drops are available from NHS health centres through the Healthy Start scheme, and some families receiving certain benefits, may be entitled to free vitamin supplements and weekly vouchers to spend on milk, fruit and vegetables.** [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)

You can also find supplements containing these vitamins in amounts that are suitable for children at pharmacies and other retailers.

# Other food matters

## Sugar

Sugary foods (like biscuits, cakes, sweets and chocolate) and drinks shouldn't be a regular part of children's diets as they can add a lot of calories and can increase the risk of tooth decay. If including sugary foods in the diet, it is better to keep these to meal times. Even low calorie or diet drinks can be acidic and increase the risk of tooth erosion and so these are not recommended.

## Salt

Limit the amount of salty foods your child eats. Foods such as crisps, ready meals, some breakfast cereals, ham, baked beans, sauces, olives and smoked fish can contain added salt so check the food labels or buy low-salt versions.

**Your child should eat no more than 2g of salt per day. For example, one packet (25g) of crisps contains about 0.3g of salt, one slice of ham contains about 0.3g of salt, 2 tbsp of standard baked beans contains about 0.5g of salt.**

### TOP TIP

*Try using spices and herbs to flavour foods when cooking rather than adding salt and you don't need to add salt to children's food at the table.*

# WARNING!

## FOOD ALLERGIES

**Don't cut out foods from your child's diet unless an allergy or intolerance has been professionally diagnosed by a doctor or a dietitian who can then advise you on the best treatment and diet to avoid symptoms.**

Very few children have true food allergies and many children will grow out of these by the time they start school.

## CHOKING

Any food has the potential to cause choking, especially small, round or hard foods, or those that are difficult to chew such as whole grapes, whole nuts, whole cherry tomatoes and sweets.

**NEVER leave a young child alone while eating, make sure they are sitting down, and encourage them to chew properly.**

A first aid course will help you to respond appropriately should your baby or child choke whilst eating. Try your local Children's Centre for courses and information.

## Physical activity

Encourage your child to be physically active for at least 3 hours (180 minutes) every day. This could be any kind of movement, like rolling and playing on the floor, walking, running, dancing, playing with other children, going to the park, or swimming.

Try to avoid your child being still for too long: sitting for long periods e.g. in high chairs, car seats or buggies, watching TV or playing computer games.

# Lifestyle

## Healthy Teeth

Encourage good dental habits with your child by brushing teeth twice a day with toothpaste containing fluoride and visit the dentist regularly.

Foods and drinks that are high in sugar like sweets, sugary drinks, and biscuits, can increase the risk of tooth decay and shouldn't be a regular part of a child's diet. Foods that stick to teeth like savoury snacks and dried fruit can also increase the risk of decay and so should be avoided between meals.



“ Keeping your child physically active can help them build healthy bones, develop coordination and maintain a healthy weight. ”

For more information about nutrition for preschool children visit [www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving/toddlers](http://www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving/toddlers)



© British Nutrition Foundation June 2019. Next review due June 2022.

Developed by the British Nutrition Foundation. Originally funded by Danone Nutricia Early Years Nutrition and updated using an educational grant from the Early Years Nutrition Partnership. Food images in toddler portion sizes provided by the Infant and Toddler Forum.

BNF is grateful for to the following experts for reviewing the content of the 5532 resources: Dr Pauline Emmet, University of Bristol; Dr Frankie Phillips, Registered Dietitian, independent nutrition consultant and member of BDA plant-based nutrition group and Judy More, independent Registered Dietitian and Nutritionist specialising in child nutrition.