A guide to planning, developing and providing healthy, balanced and nutritious food in children’s early years settings.
Acknowledgments

This guide has been developed by Middlesbrough Council in collaboration with the Children’s Food Trust as part of their Department for Education funded Eat Better, Start Better programme.

The creation and development of the Food4Health Early Years programme has been possible with the support of children’s day nurseries and other early years settings in Middlesbrough, and through the work of public health staff in NHS Middlesbrough and Middlesbrough Council.

Photographs in this guide have been provided courtesy of Poppets Day Nursery, Park End and Parkway Day Nursery, Coulby Newham. Additional images by Helena Little (Brave Design), Erica Hocking and Karla Gowlett, with thanks to Katharine Bruce Community Nursery, part of the London Early Years Foundation, and are used with the permission of the Children’s Food Trust.
Contents

Introduction Page 3

Infants up to six months Page 4 - 6

Weaning Page 7

Meals and snacks for children aged 1-5 years Page 8 – 20

Example 4-week menu for children aged 1-5 years Page 21 – 25

Encouraging children to eat well Page 26 – 33

Food Safety and hygiene Page 34

Further information and guidance Page 35
Children need the right balance of energy and nutrients for growth, development and activity. It is important that children develop healthy eating habits from a young age, as they influence growth, development and achievement in later life.

Encouraging children to eat a balanced diet also helps to ensure they maintain a healthy weight and reduce the risk of serious diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, stroke and cancer in later life.

Many young children in the UK eat a diet too high in saturated fat, sugar and salt, and too low in fruit and vegetables, and important nutrients such as iron, zinc and vitamin A.

As the number of children attending early years settings rises, so does the need for carers to ensure that children receive good nutrition and remain physically active whilst in their care. It is important that the food and eating patterns which children are exposed to outside the home promote positive attitudes towards good nutrition, and early years settings are in a unique position to have a positive influence on the nutritional intake of the children in their care.

This guide gives advice on nutrition and meal planning for children under five. Following these guidelines will help ensure that the food you provide for children is healthy, balanced and nutritious as required by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework, revised in 2012.
Infants up to six months

Infants up to six months of age usually receive all their nutritional requirements from breast milk or infant formula.

Breast milk

Breast milk is recognised as providing the best nutrition for babies. It is easily digested, hygienic and contains important antibodies to help babies fight infection.

The Department of Health recommends exclusive breast feeding for around the first six months of a baby’s life - breast milk provides all the nutrients that babies need, and helps to protect them from infections and diseases.

Fully breastfed babies do not need other drinks until they start eating solid foods.

Babies who are breastfed are at a reduced risk of developing eczema, serious ear, chest and stomach bugs and constipation, and are less likely to be obese and develop diabetes when they are older. The benefits of breastfeeding to mothers include reduced risk of breast and ovarian cancer, and weight loss - as breast feeding uses up to 500 calories a day - making it easier for mothers to return to their original pre-pregnancy weight.

Mothers who return to work but wish to continue providing breast milk for their baby should be encouraged to do so. Staff working in early years settings should support breast feeding mothers and encourage them to continue providing breast milk.

Knowing the correct procedures and storage guidelines for expressed milk may help support a mother’s decision whether or not to continue to breastfeed while her child is in day care.

Your early years business should have a written breastfeeding policy containing the storage and handling guidelines for breast milk and it should be routinely communicated to all staff members.
Storage of breast milk

Expressed breast milk should be clearly labelled with the child’s name and the date it was refrigerated or frozen. It should only be used for that child. Store breast milk near the back of the refrigerator where the temperature is coolest and more stable.

The temperature of the refrigerator should be checked daily to ensure correct chill holding - see storage guidelines below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
<th>Storage duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refrigerator</td>
<td>0°C to 4°C</td>
<td>Up to 3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freezer compartment</td>
<td>Below 0°C</td>
<td>Up to 2 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freezer</td>
<td>-18°C or lower</td>
<td>Up to 6 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frozen breast milk should be defrosted in the refrigerator. Once the milk is defrosted use it straight away. It should not be refrozen once thawed. Do not defrost or warm breast milk in a microwave – it should be warmed in hot water or in a bottle warmer to ensure even heating.

Milk remaining from a feed that was thawed and warmed must be discarded. Any expressed breast milk left over at the end of the day should be returned to the parent or guardian, or disposed of.

Advice for parents

Bottles used for storing breast milk should be made from durable plastic or use glass containers with tight fitting lids. Each bottle should be clearly labelled with the date it was expressed together with your child’s name before being given to the child care setting. Only the amount of milk your child is likely to consume should be bottled and given to the child care setting.

When freezing breast milk leave a space in the container to allow for expansion and thaw in the refrigerator. Milk that has been defrosted in a refrigerator can be stored for up to 12 hours. Thawed milk cannot be re-frozen.

Breastfeeding Welcome Scheme

The Breastfeeding Welcome Scheme aims to champion and improve the support available to mothers to breastfeed their babies outside of the home. The scheme recognises public places that offer good facilities and support for breastfeeding mothers and their families.

By clearly signposting breastfeeding-friendly venues, the scheme aims to encourage mothers to feel comfortable feeding their baby in public places.
Middlesbrough Council is encouraging any venue to sign up to the scheme. Businesses that are interested in being recognised as a breastfeeding welcome venue can email rc-pct.breastfeedingwelcomescheme@nhs.net to register their interest and receive an information pack.

More details on the Breastfeeding Welcome Scheme can be found at www.breastfeedingwelcomescheme.org.uk.

**Infant formula**

If a baby is not being breastfed, only appropriate infant formula milk can meet their nutritional needs.

For babies given infant formula, it is essential that feeds are prepared correctly and safely. Ideally, feeds should be made up freshly for each feed, using water that has been boiled then left to cool for no more than 30 minutes.

Ready to feed liquid formula can be used in childcare settings. Once opened, the carton should be stored in the fridge, with the cut corner turned down, and should not be stored for longer than 24 hours. If parents wish to provide feeds made up from powdered formula, the storage of these should be kept to a minimum. Feeds should be made as close as possible to feeding time, cooled and refrigerated at 5°C or less.

If feeds are made up in advance they should be stored for the minimum amount of time possible and not kept longer than 24 hours.

When preparing infant formula it should be made in a separate area to other milk preparation. Hands must be washed thoroughly and dried hygienically and work surfaces cleaned and disinfected before and after use.

Manufacturer’s instructions for preparing formula feeds must be carefully followed. This includes using the correct amount of powder and water, using only freshly boiled and cooled water and sterilising all equipment before use. Any formula left over after feeding must be disposed of.

Cooled boiled water can be offered to a formula fed baby after or between feeds, particularly during hot weather. Water is the best additional drink; tap water should be boiled and cooled for infants aged less than six months. If bottled water is given to children, ensure it is suitable as natural mineral water may have a mineral content that is unsuitable for babies. Still bottled spring water must be checked to ensure it is suitable for infant feeding and should be treated the same as tap water- boiled and cooled for infants younger than six months.
Weaning

Weaning should start at around six months of age, as this is the time when breast or formula milk alone is no longer enough for healthy growth and development.

Weaning onto a good variety of healthy foods provides babies with energy and essential nutrients.

From six months, weaning foods can include:

- mashed or soft cooked vegetables such as parsnip, potato, sweet potato and carrot
- soft fruit including mashed banana, avocado, pear or cooked apple
- baby rice or baby cereal mixed with the baby’s usual (breast or formula) milk

When a baby becomes used to these foods, a wider range of foods can be gradually introduced. These include soft cooked meat such as chicken, mashed fish (check very carefully for bones), pasta, noodles, toast, pieces of chapatti, lentils and mashed rice. You can also offer well-cooked eggs, and full-fat low sugar dairy products like cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais or custard.

It is important to progress at the baby’s pace. The amount of food given should be gradually increased by offering solid food at two and then three meals a day, so that the baby’s diet includes food from each of these groups:

- fruit and vegetables
- bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods
- meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein
- milk and dairy products.

Whole cows milk can be used in cooking or mixed with food, but not given as a main drink until babies are one year old. As solid food increases, milk intake will gradually decrease, however, 500-600mls of breast milk or infant formula should be given daily until one year old.

Do not add salt or sugar to food prepared for babies, and avoid honey until babies are at least one year old.

For more information on weaning visit NHS Choices www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby or Start4Life www.nhs.co.uk/start4life
Foods to avoid

There are certain foods that should be avoided for children under five years, which are listed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Under 6 months</th>
<th>Under 1 year</th>
<th>Under 2 years</th>
<th>Under 5 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooked eggs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy foods</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cows’ milk as a drink</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓ (full fat)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish and shellfish</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citrus fruits</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liver</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeds</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole nuts*</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground nuts and nut spreads*</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft and unpasteurised cheeses</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Added salt</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Added sugar</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat or other gluten containing foods/cereals (e.g. bread and rusks)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Weaning is not recommended before six months, but if weaning is started before six months there are some foods to avoid as they may cause allergies or make babies ill.

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

Providing meals and snacks for children aged 1-5 years

Children under five (particularly those under two) are growing quickly, have high energy requirements and eat smaller amounts than older children and adults. It is therefore important that they eat regular meals and snacks containing sufficient energy and nutrients to meet their needs. Children under five need more energy from fat than older children and adults and they should have less fibre as this is bulky and can fill them up before they get enough energy and nutrients from other foods.

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

- **Starchy foods**
- **Fruit and vegetables**
- **Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein**
- **Milk and dairy foods**

Planning meals and snacks to include a wide variety of food and drinks from these four food groups each day will provide children with the balance of nutrients they need.

It is also important to ensure that children do not eat too much sugar, salt and saturated fat. Eating sugary food and drinks too often can damage teeth and can provide energy but not other essential nutrients. Eating a diet high in salt can lead to high blood pressure and saturated fat can increase the risk of coronary heart disease, diabetes and some cancers in later life.
Planning menus for children aged 1-5 years

Young children need to eat little and often - time your meals and snacks so that they can eat regularly, with no more than three hours between meals and snacks.

Early years settings can ensure that the meals and snacks provided for children are balanced, using the following steps when planning menus:

Step 1: Plan menus for all meals and snacks - this helps you to check that menus are varied and balanced and helps with shopping and food preparation.
Step 2: Plan menus that cover at least a full week but ideally a three or four week period.
Step 3: Plan meals and snacks to meet the guidelines in this guide
Step 4: Plan menus to include a variety of foods, textures and colours
Step 5: Introduce a new menu at least twice a year to incorporate seasonality and gives children the chance to try new foods
Step 6: Cater for the cultural and dietary needs of all the children in your care
Step 7: Share menus for meals and snacks with parents

Food and drink guidelines

The following food and drink guidelines describe how often, how much and which types of food from the different food groups to provide for children aged one to five years. The guidelines for children aged one to five years are aligned to the Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England, published by the Children’s Food Trust as part of the Eat Better, Start Better programme.

Where it states to limit a certain food, these should be provided no more than once a week. This will help to limit saturated fat, sugar and salt in children’s diets, and increase the variety of foods offered. Where it states to avoid certain foods or drinks, these should not be provided as part of any meals or snacks.
Starchy foods

Starchy foods provide energy, carbohydrate, fibre and B vitamins. Fortified breakfast cereals can also be a good source of iron.

Starchy foods 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, wholemeal pasta, brown rice, oats and wholegrain breakfast cereal.

Guidelines for providing starchy foods

✓ 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. 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, sugar and salt

✓ Choose breakfast cereals with low or medium sugar content (no more than 15g sugar per 100g cereal). Avoid cereals that are high in sugar e.g. sugar coated or chocolate coated cereals.
✓ Choose bread and bread products with a low salt content where possible.
✓ Limit starchy foods which have been fried, 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) and avoid flavoured rice, pasta and noodle products as these can be high in salt.

Portion sizes

The nutrient content of food and drink provided for children depends on the portion size that is offered. The size of the plates and bowls used in the following portion size section are shown below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bread</th>
<th>Potatoes, sweet potatoes and other starchy root vegetables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Including all types of bread, chapattis, naan bread, rotis, bagels, pitta bread, crackers, breadsticks and oatcakes.</td>
<td>Including yam, plantain, cocoyam and cassava.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1½ small slices or 1 large slice bread (20–30g)</td>
<td>1 small baked or 1–2 boiled potatoes (80–100g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½–1 muffin, bread roll or pitta bread or 1 mini version (25–50g)</td>
<td>2–3 tablespoons mashed potato (80–100g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–4 mini breadsticks (8–10g) 1–2 crackers (8–16g) or 1–2 oatcakes (10–20g)</td>
<td>1 small baked root vegetable (80–100g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–3 tablespoons mashed, diced starchy vegetables (80–100g)</td>
<td>2–3 tablespoons mashed, diced starchy vegetables (80–100g)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breakfast cereals</th>
<th>Pasta, noodles, rice and other grains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Including porridge, cornflakes and rice crispies.</td>
<td>Including couscous, bulgar wheat, maize (polenta) and cornmeal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3–5 tablespoons breakfast cereal (20g–30g)</td>
<td>3–4 tablespoons pasta or noodles (80g–100g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–1½ wheat biscuits (20g–30g)</td>
<td>2–3 tablespoons rice (80g–100g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⅓–½ bowl porridge made with milk (100–110g)</td>
<td>2–3 tablespoons grains (80g–100g)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wholemeal toast (25g) as part of snack</th>
<th>Potato wedges (90g) as part of lunch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cornflakes (25g) as part of breakfast</td>
<td>White spaghetti (90g) as part of lunch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables are an important source of vitamins including vitamin A and C, minerals such as zinc and iron, and fibre. Fruit and vegetables include fresh, frozen, canned, dried and juiced.

Fruit juice can only count as 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.

Guidelines for providing fruit and vegetables

- 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. This dilution balances the benefit from the vitamins in the juice, with the relatively high sugar content, which can damage children’s teeth.
- Provide dried fruit at meal times only rather than as a snack, to help protect children’s teeth.

Limiting saturated fat, sugar and salt

- Choose canned vegetables and pulses without added salt and sugar, and fruit 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. Baked beans can only count as a vegetable once a week.

Food safety information

- All fruit and vegetables should be washed thoroughly.
- To reduce the risk of choking, remove any stones or pips before serving, halve small vegetables (e.g. cherry tomatoes and grapes) and cut large fruit into slices instead of small chunks.
Typical portion sizes (as served) for fruit and vegetables for a child aged 1 to 5 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetables</th>
<th>Pulses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Including fresh, frozen and canned vegetables served with meals and within dishes, and raw salad vegetables such as carrot, cucumber and tomato.</td>
<td>Including beans (such as kidney beans, haricot beans, butter beans, pinto beans, broad beans), chickpeas, lentils, processed peas and baked beans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–2 tablespoons cooked vegetables (40g)</td>
<td>½–1 tablespoons pulses (40g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small bowl vegetable soup (150g)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4–6 raw vegetable sticks (40g)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet corn (40g) served as part of a meal</td>
<td>Houmous (40g) served as part of a snack</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fruit</th>
<th>Unsweetened, diluted fruit juice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Including fresh fruit served with meals and snacks and included in desserts, canned fruit in juice, stewed fruit and dried fruit such as raisins and apricots.</td>
<td>Including juice (diluted half juice to half water) and smoothies (100% puréed fruit, diluted half fruit to half water).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ large piece of fruit such as apple or pear (40g)</td>
<td>Unsweetened fruit juice, diluted half juice and half water (100ml = 50ml juice and 50ml water)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–3 small fruits e.g. apricots (40g)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–2 tablespoons berries (40g), fruit canned in juice (40-65g) or stewed fruit (40g)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½–1 tablespoon or 2–5 pieces dried fruit (15–30g)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strawberries (40g) served as part of a snack</td>
<td>Diluted fruit juice (50ml juice, 50ml water)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein

Foods from this group provide protein, iron and zinc. Oily fish provides omega 3 fatty acids, vitamin A and vitamin D.

This food group includes fresh or frozen meat and poultry, fresh, frozen or canned fish, shellfish, eggs, meat alternatives (such as Quorn™ or soya), pulses and nuts*.

Guidelines for providing meat, fish and alternatives

✓ Provide a portion of meat, fish, meat alternative, eggs or pulses as part of lunch and tea each day and across the week.
✓ Foods from this group can be provided as part of snacks once or twice a 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.
✓ Provide one lunch and one tea that uses a meat alternative or pulses as the protein source.
✓ Provide vegetarian children with two or three portions of meat alternatives, pulses or nuts* each day.
✓ Provide oily fish (such as salmon, sardines or pilchards) at least once every three weeks, but not more than twice a week. Note: canned salmon is an oily fish, but canned tuna is not, as the omega 3 fatty acids are removed during canning.

Limiting saturated fat, sugar and salt

✓ Use canned pulses with no added salt or sugar.
✓ Use reduced salt / sugar baked beans - avoid baked beans containing artificial sweeteners.
✓ Limit bought and homemade meat products (eg. sausages, burgers, nuggets, sausage rolls, individual pies and canned meat.)
✓ Limit bought and homemade fish products (eg. fish fingers and coated fish products.)
✓ Limit bought and homemade products made from meat alternatives (eg. vegetarian sausages, burgers, nuggets and pies.)

Food safety information

✓ Make sure fish dishes are free of bones.
✓ Avoid shark, swordfish and marlin, as they may contain levels of mercury that can affect a child’s developing nervous system.
✓ Avoid raw shellfish and cook shellfish thoroughly to reduce the risk of food poisoning.
✓ Avoid raw eggs, or food containing raw or partially cooked 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*.

* Be allergy aware - information about food allergies and developing an allergy plan is available from www.allergyuk.org
Typical portion sizes (as served) for meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein for a child one to five years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meat and poultry</th>
<th>Fish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Meat includes beef, lamb, pork, mutton and venison,  
  - Poultry includes chicken, turkey and duck. | - White fish includes cod, haddock, plaice, Pollack, coley and canned tuna  
  - Oily fish includes salmon, mackerel, trout, sardines, pilchards and fresh tuna  
  - Shellfish includes prawns, mussels, shrimps and crab. |
| Meat and poultry served by itself: 1 slice or 1–2 tablespoons chopped meat (30–40g)  
Meat and poultry in sauces and stews: 2–3 tablespoons (90g–120g) | Fish served by itself: 1 slice, ½ fillet or 1–2 tablespoons (30–40g)  
Fish in sauces and stews: 2–3 tablespoons (90g–120g) |

![Chicken (35g) as part of lunch](image)

![Pilchards (35g) as part of tea](image)

| Eggs: includes boiled, scrambled and poached eggs and eggs served in omelettes and quiches.  
Ground nuts and nut butters*: includes ground almonds, hazelnuts, brazil nuts, peanuts, peanut butter and cashew butter.  
Meat alternatives: includes soya bean products such as soya mince and tofu, textured vegetable protein and Quorn™.  
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. | Eggs served by themselves: 1 egg (50g)  
Ground nuts served by themselves: 1–2 tablespoons (30–50g)* |
|---|---|
| Meat alternatives or pulses served by themselves: 1–2 tablespoons (30–50g)  
Meat alternatives or pulses in sauces and stews: 2–3 tablespoons (90–120g) | Meat alternatives or pulses served by themselves: 1–2 tablespoons (30–50g)  
Meat alternatives or pulses in sauces and stews: 2–3 tablespoons (90–120g) |

![Scrambled egg (50g) as part of tea](image)

* Be allergy aware - information about food allergies and developing an allergy plan is available from www.allergyuk.org
Milk and dairy foods

Milk and dairy foods are a good source of energy, protein, calcium and vitamin A.

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

Butter and cream are not included in this food group as they are classified as food high in fat

Guidelines for providing milk and dairy foods

- Children should have three portions of milk and dairy foods each day, from meals, snacks and drinks (including those at home).
- Full fat milk should be given to children aged one to two years as their main drink, to give them 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.
- Avoid skimmed milk and skimmed milk products. 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 two who are growing well and eating a healthy, balanced diet can have low-fat varieties.
- Choose yoghurt and fromage frais with a lower sugar content (products with more than 15g sugar per 100g are high in sugar) or use plain yoghurt and add fruit to sweeten.
- Avoid ice cream and sweetened frozen yoghurt between meals. Limit dairy ice cream to once a week with fruit-based desserts.
- Avoid canned milks, sweetened milk drinks and sweetened milkshakes, as these contain added sugar.

Food safety information

- 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 under five years should not be given rice milk as it has been found to contain small amounts of arsenic.
- Goats’ and sheep’s milk can be provided for children over the age of one year. Note: these milks are not suitable alternatives for children with an allergy or intolerance to cows’ milk.
- Unsweetened calcium fortified soya milk can be used as a non-dairy alternative to cows’ milk for children over one year, and can be given as a main drink from two years. Note: soya milk is not a suitable alternative for all children with an allergy or intolerance to cows’ milk.
**Typical portion sizes (as served) for milk and dairy foods for a child aged 1 to 5 years**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Milk and milk alternatives</strong></th>
<th><strong>Includes pasteurised cows’, goats’ and sheep’s milk, plus alternatives including plain soya milk drinks enriched with calcium</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milk drinks: ½ cup (100ml–150ml)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Cheese</strong></th>
<th><strong>Includes hard and soft cheeses</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hard cheese: 1–2 tablespoons grated (15–20g)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft cheese: (20g–25g)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Milk** (100ml) as a drink | **Cheese (17g) as part of a snack** |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Yoghurt and fromage frais</strong></th>
<th><strong>Includes natural (plain) yoghurt and fromage frais, and yoghurt drinks.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small pot (60g) or ½ large individual pot (half of 125–140g), or 1–2 tablespoons (50–75g)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsweetened yoghurt drinks (60g)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Yoghurt (60g) as part of a snack** | **Rice pudding (100g) as part of dessert** |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Custard and milk-based puddings</strong></th>
<th><strong>Includes custard made with milk, rice pudding and semolina pudding</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Custard: 3–4 tablespoons (50–75g)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice pudding: 3–4 tablespoons (70–90g)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semolina: 3–4 tablespoons (85–110g)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Be allergy aware - information about food allergies and developing an allergy plan is available from [www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org)
Puddings, desserts and cakes

Puddings, desserts and cakes provide energy and nutrients such as iron and calcium.

Puddings made with cereals, milk and fruit can be included as part of a healthy, balanced diet for young children.

Guidelines for providing puddings, desserts and cakes

✓ A dessert should be provided as part of lunch and tea each day.
✓ Vary the desserts offered with main meals each week. For example, provide a variety of fruit-based desserts (e.g. fruit crumbles or baked apples), milk-based puddings (e.g. rice pudding, semolina), yoghurt/fromage frais, cakes and biscuits, and cold desserts.
✓ Avoid all sweet foods (including cakes, biscuits, cookies, flapjacks, chocolate and sweets) between meals to protect children’s teeth.
✓ Limit confectionery such as chocolate chips, and use only as part of cakes or desserts.

Drinks

Guidelines for providing drinks

✓ Children must have access to drinking water throughout the day. They should be encouraged to help themselves to water either from the tap or from a water jug.
✓ Water and milk are the only drinks that should be provided between meals and with snacks.
✓ Fruit juice should be provided at meal times only, and should be diluted half juice and half water.
✓ Avoid fruit juice drinks (these are not the same as fruit juice). They include drinks such as squash, fizzy drinks, energy drinks and flavoured water. These drinks provide little nutritional benefit and contribute to tooth decay.
✓ Avoid tea, coffee, cola and other drinks with added caffeine or other stimulants.
Typical portion sizes (as served) for puddings and cakes for a child aged 1 to 5 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hot fruit-based desserts</th>
<th>Milk-based desserts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pineapple upside down pudding (60g) served with custard (60g)</td>
<td>Semolina (85g) and blackberry compote (40g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crunchy summer crumble (60g) with yoghurt (60g)</td>
<td>Banana and cinnamon rice pudding (120g)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yoghurt and fromage frais</th>
<th>Cakes and biscuits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fromage frais (60g) with raspberry puree (40g)</td>
<td>Cocoa and beetroot cake (50g) served with cocoa custard (60g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fromage frais (60g) with banana (40g)</td>
<td>Banana and raisin flapjack (50g)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fat, salt and sugar

How much fat, salt and sugar there is in meals depends on the amount of fat, salt and sugar found naturally in food and if added to food during preparation and cooking.

Mixing pre-prepared foods together or serving too many pre-prepared foods can easily lead to an unbalanced and unhealthy diet.

Fat

Children aged one to five years need more energy from fat than older children and adults, as they have higher energy requirements for their size. However, it is important that children have the right type of fat in their diets. A diet high in saturated fat (from animal sources such as cheese, meat products, butter, cakes and biscuits) can increase the risk of coronary heart disease and some cancers in later life, so the amount of saturated fat in food provided for young children should be limited. Sources of unsaturated fat (from plant and fish sources) should be used.

✔ Practical ways to limit saturated fat include limiting the meat products and fried starchy foods children are given; limiting pastry; choosing lean cuts of meat; use vegetable oil for cooking and vegetable spread for sandwiches and toast.

Salt

Salt is part of our diet, however, the amount of salt in the diet of a child is often too high and this can lead to high blood pressure. Children aged one to three years should have no more than 2g of salt per day (3g for children aged four to six years).

✔ Limit the salt in children’s diets by not adding salt when cooking or offering it for children to add to their food; limiting the use of ready made sauces, soups, stocks and gravy granules; limiting the use of condiments such as ketchup and avoiding salty snacks such as crisps. Check food labels and choose foods that are low in salt (less than 0.3g salt per 100g).

Sugar

Limiting the amount of sugary foods and drinks in children’s diets, and how often they have them, reduces their risk of tooth decay. The sugar in milk and fresh fruit is not as damaging to children’s teeth as the sugar in foods such as sweets, cakes, chocolate, fizzy drinks and added sugar/honey.

✔ Limit children’s sugar intake by avoiding sweet foods and drinks other than milk and water between meals, and checking food labels to choose foods that are lower in added sugar.
**Example four week menus for children aged one to five years**

The following examples of weekly menus for a four week period are for children aged one to five years in an early years setting.

Recipes are available at [www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/food4health/recipes](http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/food4health/recipes)

These recipes are based on adult portions, so follow the portion size information in this guide if providing to children aged one to five years, and check to see if you need to make any changes for this age group e.g. leaving out alcohol or stock cubes that are high in salt.

Example spring/summer and autumn/winter menus and recipes can also be downloaded from the Children’s Food Trust website: [www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk/eatbetterstartbetter](http://www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk/eatbetterstartbetter)
## Menu 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breakfast</strong></td>
<td>Rice crisps (25g) and milk (100ml)</td>
<td>Porridge (100g) and raisins (25g)</td>
<td>Cornflakes (25g) and milk (100ml)</td>
<td>Wheat biscuits (25g) with milk (100ml)</td>
<td>Bagel (50g) and spread (4g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed berries (40g)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sliced pear (40g)</td>
<td>Dried apricots (25g)</td>
<td>Apple slices (40g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morning snack</strong></td>
<td>Wholemeal toast (25g) and spread (4g)</td>
<td>Pepper and cucumber sticks (40g)</td>
<td>Rice cake (16g) and sliced banana (40g)</td>
<td>Carrot and cucumber Sticks (40g)</td>
<td>Breadsticks (7g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orange segments (40g) Milk (100ml)</td>
<td>Milk (100ml)</td>
<td>Milk (100ml)</td>
<td>Milk (100ml)</td>
<td>Grapes and satsuma (40g) Milk (100ml)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
<td>Tomato herb chicken casserole (100g)</td>
<td>Spaghetti bolognaise (200g)</td>
<td>Beef stew (100g)</td>
<td>Mixed bean chilli (110g) and rice (90g)</td>
<td>Fish pie (170g) Boiled vegetables (40g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pasta (90g)</td>
<td>Fresh fruit jelly (70g)</td>
<td>Mashed potato (90g)</td>
<td>Mixed berry mousse (70g)</td>
<td>Lemon drizzle cake (50g) and custard (60g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Steamed vegetables (40g)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Steamed vegetables (40g)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apple crumble (60g) and custard (60g)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spiced apple cake (50g) and custard (60g)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Afternoon snack</strong></td>
<td>Grapes (20g)</td>
<td>Pancakes (25g)</td>
<td>Fromage frais (60g) with pineapple chunks (40g)</td>
<td>White toast (25g) with cheese spread (18g)</td>
<td>Sliced pear (40g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sliced pear (20g) Milk (100ml)</td>
<td>Kiwi slices (40g) Milk (100ml)</td>
<td>Peach slices (40g) Milk (100ml)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Milk (100ml)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tea</strong></td>
<td>Tomato, red pepper and bean soup (150g)</td>
<td>Fish cakes (50g)</td>
<td>Spanish omelette (90g)</td>
<td>Wholemeal sandwich (cheese, tuna, ham, turkey, egg) (60g)</td>
<td>Jacket potatoes (90g) with baked beans (55g) and salad (40g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crusty roll (25g)</td>
<td>Homemade potato wedges (90g)</td>
<td>Rice salad (90g)</td>
<td>Ginger biscuits (20g) and chopped fruit (40g)</td>
<td>Fresh fruit selection (40g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sultana flapjack (50g)</td>
<td>Salad (40g)</td>
<td>Fromage frais (60g) and pineapple chunks (40g)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fruit muffin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Water is freely available with meals and across the day
## Menu 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breakfast</strong></td>
<td>Toast (25g) with spread (4g) and pear slices (40g)</td>
<td>Cornflakes (25g) and milk (100ml)</td>
<td>Malt loaf (35g) and spread (4g) with berries (40g)</td>
<td>Toast (25g) with spread (4g) and apple slices (40g)</td>
<td>Rice crispies (25g) and milk (100ml) Dried apricots (25g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morning snack</strong></td>
<td>Milk (100ml) Crackers (15g) with cottage cheese (15g) Pineapple chunks (40g)</td>
<td>Fromage frais (60g) Sliced banana (40g) Water (100ml)</td>
<td>Milk (100ml) Rice cakes (16g) with soft cheese (18g) Orange wedges (40g)</td>
<td>Milk (100ml) Sliced banana (40g) and yoghurt (60g)</td>
<td>Milk (100ml) Wholemeal toast (25g) with spread (4g) and orange slices (40g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
<td>Mackerel mash (130g) and mixed vegetables (40g) Strawberries (40g) and yoghurt (60g)</td>
<td>Roast chicken (35g) with roast potatoes (90g) and vegetables (40g) Chocolate sponge (50g) with custard (0g)</td>
<td>Beef lasagne (150g) with seasonal Vegetables (40g) Fresh fruit salad (40g) with yoghurt (60g)</td>
<td>Mediterranean beef (90g) Pasta (90g)</td>
<td>Chunky lentil, potato and spinach curry (100g) with rice (90g) Banana surprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Afternoon snack</strong></td>
<td>Milk (100ml) Cucumber, tomatoes and celery (40g)</td>
<td>Milk (100ml) Grapes and melon (40g) Breadsticks (7g)</td>
<td>Milk (100ml) Carrot sticks, peppers and cucumber (40g)</td>
<td>Milk (100ml) Cracker bread (15g), with soft cheese (18g) and grapes (40g)</td>
<td>Milk (100ml) Apple and kiwi slices (40g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tea</strong></td>
<td>Chicken and vegetable pizza (75g) cherry tomatoes (40g)</td>
<td>Quorn™ and vegetable pasta bake (200g)</td>
<td>Beans and cheese on Toast (100g)</td>
<td>Bean, leek and potato soup (150g) Crusty bread roll (25g)</td>
<td>Fish pie (170g) with seasonal vegetables (40g) Fresh fruit platter (40g)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Water is freely available at meal times and across the day.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breakfast</strong></td>
<td>Cornflakes (25g) with milk (100ml) and raisins (25g)</td>
<td>Boiled egg (50g) and mushrooms (40g) on toast (25g)</td>
<td>Rice crispies (25g) with milk (100ml) and sliced banana (40g)</td>
<td>Porridge (100g) with sultanas (25g)</td>
<td>Toasted teacake (35g) and spread (4g) with grapes (40g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morning snack</strong></td>
<td>Milk (100ml) Wholemeal toast (25g) with Spread (4g) and melon (40g)</td>
<td>Milk (100ml) Grapes and melon (40g)</td>
<td>Milk (100ml) Crackers and spread (20g) with pineapple (40g)</td>
<td>White toast (25g) with soft cheese (18g) and carrot sticks (40g)</td>
<td>Yoghurt (60g) Apple slices (40g) Water (100ml)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
<td>Sausage hotpot (100g) Mashed potato (90g) Vegetables (40g) Eve’s pudding (60g) and custard (60g)</td>
<td>Tropical spiced rice (150g) Lemon berry cheese cake (60g)</td>
<td>Turkey and vegetables casserole (100g) with roast potatoes (90g)</td>
<td>Moroccan lamb (100g) and cous cous (90g) Peach slices (40g) and yoghurt (60g)</td>
<td>Shepherds pie (170g) and vegetables (40g) Homemade rice pudding (75g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Afternoon snack</strong></td>
<td>Milk (100ml) Banana slices (40g) and yoghurt (60g)</td>
<td>Milk (100ml) Pancakes (25g) and kiwi (40g)</td>
<td>Milk (100ml) Carrot, cucumber and celery sticks (40g)</td>
<td>Milk (100ml) Apple and pear slices (40g)</td>
<td>Milk (100ml) Rice cakes (16g) Cucumber, tomatoes and peppers (40g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tea</strong></td>
<td>Macaroni cheese (105g) with peas (40g) Fruit (40g) and yoghurt (60g)</td>
<td>Jacket potatoes (90g) with tuna and sweet corn (50g) and salad (40g)</td>
<td>Chickpea burgers (50g) in rolls (25g) with cucumber sticks (40g)</td>
<td>Minestrone and bean soup (150ml) with pitta bread (25g)</td>
<td>Breaded fish (40g) Potato wedges (90g) Vegetables (40g)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Water is freely available at meal times and across the day**
## Menu 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breakfast</strong></td>
<td>Cornflakes (25g) and milk (100ml)</td>
<td>Toast (25g) with spread (4g) and pear slices (40g)</td>
<td>Malt loaf (35g) and spread (4g) with berries (40g)</td>
<td>Toast (25g) with spread (4g) and apple slices (40g)</td>
<td>Rice crispies (25g) and milk (100ml) Raisins (25g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apple slices (40g)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morning snack</strong></td>
<td>Wholemeal toast (25g) with spread (4g) and orange (40g) Milk (100ml)</td>
<td>Fromage frais (60g) and sliced banana (40g) Milk (100ml)</td>
<td>Rice cakes (16g) with avocado (40g) Milk (100ml)</td>
<td>Kiwi and sliced pear (40g) Milk (100ml)</td>
<td>Oatcake (15g) with apple slices and grapes (40g) Milk (100ml)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
<td>Chicken and mango curry (100g) with rice (50g) and pitta bread (20g) Carrot cake (50g) and custard (60g)</td>
<td>Jack and the bean stalk stew (100g) with cous-cous (90g) Summer pudding (60g)</td>
<td>Lamb hotpot (170g) with vegetables (40g)</td>
<td>Butternut squash and butterbean risotto (150g)</td>
<td>Cod (35g), potatoes (90g) and sweet corn (40g) Pear cobbler (60g) and grapes (60g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Afternoon snack</strong></td>
<td>Carrot and pepper sticks (40g) Milk (100ml)</td>
<td>Toasted muffin (30g) with grapes and pineapple (40g) Milk (100ml)</td>
<td>Cucumber and celery sticks with sliced cherry tomato (40g) Milk (100ml)</td>
<td>Crackers (15g) with cottage cheese (18g) and peaches (40g) Water (100ml)</td>
<td>Carrot and cucumber sticks (40g) Milk (100ml)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tea</strong></td>
<td>Quorn™ and vegetable noodles (150g) Melon and pineapple (40g)</td>
<td>Cheese and baked beans on toast (100g)</td>
<td>Chicken and vegetable cous cous salad (150g) Fromage frais (60g) and pineapple chunks (40g)</td>
<td>Quiche (70g) with potato wedges (90g) and salad (40g) Ginger biscuit (20g)</td>
<td>Egg and cress sandwiches (85g) Banana slices (40g)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Water is freely available at meal times and across the day
Encouraging children to eat well

Developing a food policy and putting it into practice

A food policy enables everyone to understand the setting’s approach to food provision and learning about food.

Having a policy is an effective way to making sure that the children in your care receive consistent messages about healthy eating.

When developing a policy it is appropriate to consult with staff, especially those involved in preparing and serving food. Also, try to involve parents when considering the types of foods that are to be served. It is also beneficial to involve the children as this helps them to learn about choosing food.

The policy should cover all relevant aspects of the setting’s approach to food provision and learning about food. This could include:

- the food and drink you provide for meals, snacks and drinks
- how you communicate with children and families about food
- the eating environment and social aspects of meal times
- your approach to rewards, celebrations and special events
- how you cater for cultural, religious and special dietary requirements (including allergies and intolerances)
- how you manage fussy eating
- food and drink brought from home (for example, if children can bring packed lunches and/or snacks into the setting, you can include examples of the food and drinks to include, and those not to provide).
- how you teach children about food, including making food with children
- food safety and hygiene, and staff training
- promoting breast feeding.

A step-by-step approach to developing a food policy and a template food policy is available to download from the Children’s Food Trust website www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk
Communicating with children and families

Parents and carers should be informed about the food provided to their children.

It is good practice to include parents and carers (as far as possible) when planning meals.

Examples of ways to communicate with families are provided below.

- Provide information on the routine for meals and snacks to help them plan their child’s routine at home.
- Provide a copy of your food policy and consult parents / carers when you update it.
- Provide regular feedback on what their children are eating and how well.
- Display your menus on a parent’s information board.
- Involve your catering staff wherever possible when talking to parents and children about meals.
- Encourage parents to attend events to celebrate special events 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. Eating with parents, carers and others helps children to develop social skills.

Sitting around a table to eat their meals and snacks helps children to develop good eating habits. Child sized utensils, crockery, tables and chairs may also make it easier for children to serve themselves and learn to eat independently.

The points below can help you make the most of the eating environment:

- eating areas should be clean, warm, bright and free from distractions
- use appropriately sized plates, bowls and eating utensils
- encourage children to drink from an open cup or free-flow cup as these are better for their teeth
- encourage children to choose the food they eat and to try new foods
- children should not be expected to eat everything on their plate. They should still have room for dessert. If they are still hungry after their main course they should have the opportunity to have seconds
- food should not be used as a punishment or as a reward
- meal times should be a social occasion and a time to talk about food
- 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 at their table
- wherever possible, sit with children to eat your lunch to act as a positive role model.

Although it is important that children are given the opportunity to celebrate special occasions but sometimes the food and drinks served can be high in saturated fat, sugar and/or salt. For example, the more children there are, the more birthdays there are to celebrate and therefore potentially a lot of cake.

It is important to consider the approach to celebrating occasions and sharing this with families. Birthdays could be celebrated with activities, songs and stories, dressing up or playing games and you may want to encourage parents to bring in healthier foods, or non-food items instead of cakes or sweets.
Providing food for all

A special diet is one which means a child cannot choose their foods freely, either due to an allergy, intolerance or medical need, or associated with a 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 doctor.

- All staff in the setting should be aware of children’s individual dietary requirements
- You should have a policy and procedure in place to make sure this is done in an appropriate and sensitive way
- Where children have a special dietary need, talk to their parents or carer (and health professionals if required) to understand how their needs can be met, so that all children can have healthy food appropriate for their needs
- Children with special needs should be included in meal and snacks times with the other children (unless their condition indicates otherwise)
- Children with complex needs may have additional requirements (e.g. modified texture foods), or may need support to eat.

Food allergies and intolerances

Food allergies affect an estimated 5-8% of children in the UK. The most common foods to cause an allergic reaction in children are eggs, milk, soya, wheat, gluten and peanuts.

The symptoms can include tingling in the mouth, skin rashes, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting, and 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. These do not involve the immune system, and symptoms tend to appear 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 a child has a confirmed food allergy an allergy protocol is needed. It must be accessible to all staff so that everyone caring for the child is aware of their allergy and symptoms.
Vegetarian diets

Vegetarians do not eat meat, meat products (such as lard or stock), and may not eat fish.

Vegetarian meals and snacks are suitable for all children. It is important that meals for vegetarian children are planned so they have a wide variety of foods to meet their nutritional needs.

- All lunches and teas provided for vegetarian children should include a portion of a meat alternative such as soya, tofu, textured vegetable protein (TVP), Quorn\textsuperscript{TM}, eggs, pulses or nuts*, to provide protein, and minerals such as iron and zinc.
- Include a variety of different protein sources across each week to ensure children get a good balance of nutrients.
- Provide meals and snacks containing good sources of iron and zinc, to help ensure children get enough of these essential nutrients. Vegetarian sources of these nutrients include peas, beans, lentils, soya, wholegrain cereals, dried fruit, green leafy vegetables and fortified flour and breakfast cereals.

Try to ensure that food provided for vegetarian children is of a similar appearance and texture to food given to other children.

Cultural and religious diets

Many early years settings have a diverse population, and you will need to consider the dietary needs of all 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.

Families 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. This may vary between families, so make sure you talk to individual families to ensure the menu is appropriate for their child. Try to make sure that meals provided to children following religious or cultural diets looks as similar as possible to the food being served to other children.
### Food customs of different religious and cultural groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Jewish</th>
<th>Hindu*</th>
<th>Sikh*</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Buddhist</th>
<th>Rastafarian**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>No blood spots</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>It varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk / yoghurt</td>
<td>Not with meat</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>It varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>Not with meat</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>It varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>Kosher only</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>Halal only</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>It varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutton / lamb</td>
<td>Kosher only</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>Halal only</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>It varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef / beef products</td>
<td>Kosher only</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Halal only</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>It varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork / pork products</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>Fish with fins and scales only</td>
<td>Fish with fins and scales only</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter / ghee</td>
<td>Kosher only</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>It varies</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>It varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lard</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cereal foods</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuts / pulses</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit and vegetables</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*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

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 are part of development and affect between 10 and 20% of children under five. 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.

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 to encourage their child to eat well. It is important that the approach is consistent and essential that all involved at mealtimes agree and follow the same strategy.

Tips to manage fussy eating

Modelling:
- seat fussy eaters with good eaters at mealtimes, as 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, at mealtimes and 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 10-15 tastings before they accept it
- if children are resistant to trying new foods, offer them small tastes and make sure the child maintains control e.g. they can spit the food out into a tissue if they 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 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 for trying foods 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, as they may 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.
Cooking with children

Learning about, and through food, can be linked to each of the EYFS seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational programmes in early years settings (including the three prime areas; communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development).

Cooking with children is enjoyable in its own right, and an effective way to teach children about food, and encourage them to try new foods. Many dishes can be prepared with limited equipment and ingredients.

If you 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. Some key points to bear in mind are:

- recipe which involve mixing, combining and assembling activities such as dips, scones, muffins, and 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 all children have something to do.
- use correct and safe peeling and chopping techniques and supervise their use
- plan everything and make sure you have everything ready before you start. Check the recipe and make a list of everything you need, including equipment
- clear surfaces and remove hazards to make the sessions as safe as possible
- keep yourselves, your cooking area, and your equipment as clean as possible
- before you start, tie back long hair, remove jewellery, roll up long sleeves, wash hands thoroughly and put on an apron
- allow plenty of time, and expect to make a mess!
- do not expect children to be able to do anything easily, they will need help to stir food, chop carefully and wash vegetables properly
- enjoy cooking and preparing tasty food together, and aim to cook a variety of foods, rather than just cakes and biscuits.
Food safety and hygiene

Food must be stored, handled, prepared and processed in a safe and hygienic way. This is especially important when providing food for children as they may have a low resistance to food poisoning.

It is important that children are taught basic hygiene, such as how to wash hands with plenty of soap and warm water before eating meals or snacks and after going to the toilet or touching animals.

It is also important that children develop an understanding about how to handle food and not eat food that has fallen on the floor.

People who work in children’s nurseries or who look after children as a childminder must have a good understanding on infection control and of the hygiene requirements.

Managers have a particular role to ensure that anyone who handles food for children is properly trained and knowledgeable in safe food handling and infection control procedures. However, everyone who works in a child care setting has an important role to play by helping children to develop their awareness and understanding of the need for good hygiene.

For information on food safety and hygiene rules and good practice contact the Food and Safety Team at Middlesbrough Council tel. 01642 728665 or email food&safety@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Advice on food safety, hygiene and infection control is also available from the Food Standards Agency www.food.gov.uk and the Department of Health www.dh.gov.uk
Further information and guidance

Further information and guidance on a range of areas related to providing food for children

- **NHS Choices** website (www.nhs.co.uk) includes guidance on weaning, and a balanced diet for different age groups.

- **Start4Life** website (www.nhs.uk/start4life) includes guidance on breastfeeding and weaning.

- **Healthy Start** website (www.healthystart.nhs.uk) includes information about the Healthy Start scheme, which provides vitamin supplements for certain pregnant women, women with a child under one year, and children under four, and vouchers that can be exchanged for cows’ milk, infant formula milk and fruit and vegetables.

- **Nursery milk scheme** website (www.nurserymilk.co.uk) includes information about the nursery milk scheme, which enables early years settings to claim reimbursement for the cost of 1/3 pint milk for each child under five years, attending two or more hours a day.

- **Department of Health Physical activity recommendations for children under five years** (www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-physical-activity-guidelines)

- **Safer food, better business**, (www.food.gov.uk) produced by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to support small businesses (including early years settings and childminders) put in place food safety management procedures and comply with food hygiene regulations.

- **Sustainable Food: A guide for Early Years Settings** (www.cwt.org.uk/pdfs/SustainableFoodforEYS) produced by the Caroline Walker Trust, includes guidance for early years settings about providing food more sustainably.

- **Eat Better, Start Better** resources (www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk/advice/eat-better-start-better) for early years settings in England (including guidance, example menus and recipes, and an example food policy), produced by the Children’s Food Trust.

- **The Let’s Get Cooking programme**, (www.letsgetcooking.org.uk) provides resources and guidance on cooking with children.