

# EATING WELL FOR 1–5 YEAR OLDS



Congratulations you have made the 1 year mark on the EAT Study! Many thanks for all your hard work so far and we hope you continue to enjoy being part of this exciting and innovative study.

Now that your baby is 1 year old you may have questions about his/her diet. All children of this age, including those on our study, are advised to eat healthily. This leaflet provides you with tips on how to achieve this.

If your child is in the Early Introduction Group of the study we strongly encourage you to continue giving your child the EAT Study key foods, in the suggested EAT Study weekly guideline amounts, unless otherwise instructed by the EAT Study team.

## What Is A Healthy Diet For My Child?

Children under the age of 2 years are growing rapidly, but have small stomachs and are unable to eat big portions in one sitting. For this reason it is important to provide your child with nutrient-rich meals and snacks. Try to offer 3 meals and 2-3 snacks per day. You can gradually reduce the number of snacks to once or twice a day by the time your child is 5 years old.

By now your child should have progressed on to eating chopped family meals. It is important to keep offering your child a range of tastes, colours and textures as this will help your child to learn to enjoy a wider variety of foods. Aim to include food from the four main food groups, listed below, within your child's diet daily. This will help to ensure your child receives the balanced supply of energy and nutrients needed for healthy growth and development.

### The Four Main Food Groups:

#### 1. Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods – serve these with all main meals

These foods include breakfast cereals, bread, pasta/cous cous, chapatti, potatoes, yam, plantain, noodles and grains (such as rice, millet, quinoa) and provide energy, nutrients and some fibre.

- ◆ Aim for vitamin and iron enriched breakfast cereals e.g. Cornflakes, Rice Krispies, Shreddies, Weetabix, or Cheerios.
- ◆ Try to alternate white bread, with higher fibre alternatives such as rye, granary or wholemeal to provide some fibre in your child's diet.
- ◆ Potatoes, sweet potatoes and butternut squash are easy to cook and are great for boiling, mashing, or baking.



## 2. Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein - serve twice a day (include with main meals)

Food from this group will provide your child with protein and minerals such as iron and zinc, required for healthy growth and development.

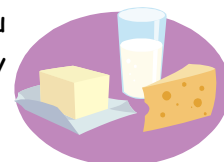
- ◆ Minced meat such as beef, chicken, turkey, pork or lamb work especially well with children. These work well in Shepherd's pie, spaghetti bolognese, meatballs and pasta or a slow cooked stew.
- ◆ Easy sandwich fillers include tuna, mashed sardines, cold meat slices, pates, smooth peanut butter and houmous.
- ◆ Pulses such as chickpeas, red kidney beans, baked beans and lentils work well in curries and casseroles.
- ◆ Include oily fish such as fresh tuna, tinned or fresh mackerel, salmon, pilchards and sardines once or twice a week (ensure all bones are removed). Try fish added to sauces and fish pies.
- ◆ Avoid giving young children shark, swordfish or marlin due to their high mercury content.
- ◆ Raw shellfish and raw or undercooked eggs may cause food poisoning in young children and so should not be offered.



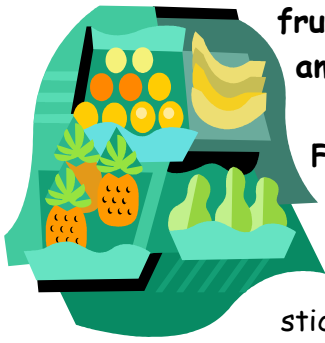
## 3. Milk and dairy foods - Offer 3 servings of dairy daily [1 serving of dairy is a small glass of milk (about 120 ml or 4 ounces), 1 slice of cheese, 1 average pot (~125ml) of yoghurt or 2 small pots of fromage frais]

Dairy foods are an important source of calcium, required for strong bones and teeth. After 1 year of age, children do not need to drink large volumes of 'milk' (for example full-fat cow's milk or formula milk), if they are having other calcium rich dairy sources like yoghurt or cheese during the day. The goal is to aim for 3 servings of a calcium rich dairy food a day.

- ◆ Use full-fat/whole milk for children under 2 years. After 2 years semi-skimmed milk is fine to give to your child however skimmed milk should not be given to children under 5 years of age.
- ◆ Milk is an excellent drink for children, and can be used on breakfast cereals or in puddings and sauces.
- ◆ Yoghurt, yoghurt drinks or fromage frais work well as a pudding or as a snack between meals.
- ◆ Melt grated cheese in main dishes (e.g. jacket potatoes, spaghetti, macaroni cheese) or try adding natural yoghurt to curries.
- ◆ If your child is allergic to cow's milk, ensure the dairy alternatives you choose are enriched with calcium and vitamin D. Please discuss which dairy alternatives are suitable for your child, with a paediatric dietitian.



#### 4. Fruit and vegetables - Offer 5 servings of fruit and vegetables daily (One fruit or vegetable serving is approximately equivalent to the amount that will fit into your child's hand)



Fruit and vegetables are rich in vitamins, minerals and fibre, which will help to keep your child healthy.

- ◆ Fruit and vegetables may be eaten raw or cooked
- ◆ Try sliced salad vegetables in sandwiches or offer vegetable sticks (e.g. carrots, peppers, cucumbers) with a dipping sauce as a snack between meals.
- ◆ Frozen, dried or tinned vegetables, are just as nutritious as fresh vegetables. Try serving these on pizzas, in soups or casseroles or with main meals.
- ◆ Fresh, frozen, dried or tinned fruit are equally nutritious. These make great puddings, fruit salad, crumbles and pies (when buying tinned fruit choose the varieties tinned in juice rather than syrup).
- ◆ Try offering fruit cut into small pieces as a healthy snack.

#### Drinks (Offer 6 - 8 drinks from an open cup daily)

Fluids are an important part of a healthy diet. It is important to ensure you provide your child with suitable drinks from appropriate containers.

By the age of 1, your child should no longer be taking drinks from a bottle as this can be damaging to teeth. Ideally a lidded beaker should have been introduced at around 6 months of age. Encourage your child to progress from a lidded, free-flow beaker to a cup as soon as he or she is ready. Remember to offer child-size servings (120-150ml or 4-5oz) when offering drinks.



Water and plain milk are the best drinks for children as they do not damage teeth. But too much milk can reduce iron absorption, so remember to give no more than 3 servings of milk (or dairy foods) per day.

Young children do not need juice if they have plenty of fruit and vegetables in their diet. However if you would like to include juice avoid giving "fruit drinks" or "juice drinks" as these tend to have additional ingredients such as added sugar and additives. Better options would be "100% juice" or "fresh fruit juice" but these should be diluted since they contain natural sugars.

Squashes, fizzy drinks and flavoured milk drinks are not recommend for young children. They can lead to poor appetite and cause tooth decay due to their high sugar content and/or acidity. Tea and coffee are also unsuitable, especially at mealtimes as they can reduce the amount of iron your child absorbs.

Encourage your child to eat his/her meal before having a drink, as drinks can be filling; which may cause children to eat less food at mealtimes.

## Healthy Snack Ideas

Remember to offer children under 2 years old a meal pattern of 3 meals and 2-3 snacks per day. Aim to offer snacks such as the ones listed below instead of sugary/fatty snacks:

- ◆ Fresh, chopped fruit e.g. apple or pear slices, banana, satsumas, seedless grapes, slices of mango, melon or pineapple.
- ◆ Fruit kebabs are a fun way to encourage 5-a-day.
- ◆ Vegetable sticks with Greek style yoghurt or houmous dip
- ◆ Plain rice cakes with peanut butter
- ◆ Cheese cubes and crackers
- ◆ Chapatti/bread sticks with a vegetable salsa dip
- ◆ Toasted bread fingers with cream cheese, houmous or smooth peanut butter
- ◆ Eggy bread fingers
- ◆ Fruit bread fingers
- ◆ 1 Oatcake
- ◆ A handful of plain cereal (i.e. not frosted or honey-coated) like rice krispies, cornflakes or cheerios. (Remember to also choose the brand with the lowest salt content)
- ◆ Home-made plain popcorn
- ◆ Yoghurt or fromage frais
- ◆ Homemade fruit yoghurt smoothies

Remember to keep offering your child a variety of different tastes, colours and textures. This will help your child to learn to enjoy a wider variety of foods, and he/she is more likely to get the nutrients required for healthy growth.





## Frequently Asked Questions



### **Does my child need a vitamin supplement?**

The Department of Health recommendations state all children between the age of 1-5 years may benefit from taking vitamin drops containing Vitamins A, C & D. This is especially important for children who do not spend much time outdoors, those who wear clothes that cover up most of their skin when outdoors and fussy eaters. Vitamin D in particular is not widely available in the foods we eat. Some foods such as oily fish, eggs, fortified margarines and some fortified breakfast cereals do contain vitamin D but the primary source is sunlight. Your health visitor can advise you on how to get healthy start vitamins free of charge if you qualify. Otherwise, you can purchase suitable alternatives with advice from your dietitian or local pharmacist.

### **How much salt can my child have in his/her diet?**

The amount of salt your child can have in his or her diet will depend on age. Children 1-3 years of age should have no more than 2 grams per day and 4-6 year olds no more than 3 grams per day. Salt is widely found in processed foods, including those needed for a healthy diet (e.g. bread, breakfast cereals, baked beans). For this reason it is important that you do not add salt when cooking or at the table. Try to compare different brands of food and choose brands with the lower salt content.

### **Is it ok to give my child honey?**

Once your child is a year old, his/her intestines are mature enough to prevent the growth of bacteria found in honey, which can sometimes cause infant botulism, so it is safe for children over the age of 1 year to have honey. However, honey is a type of sugar and can promote tooth decay, so you should still limit honey in your child's diet.

### **What if my child becomes constipated?**

A healthy diet and regular activity can help to prevent constipation. Ensure your child's fluid intake is adequate. Aim for 6 - 8 child size cups (4-5oz/120-150ml) daily. Include 5 servings of fruit and vegetables into your child's diet everyday. Offer some wholemeal/wholegrain cereals such as wholemeal bread, Weetabix, Shreddies, Porridge, Shredded Wheat. Do not add bran to food or give bran-enriched breakfast cereals to young children as this may interfere with iron absorption. However, if you think your child is already constipated (i.e. straining to pass stools and/or passing hard pellet-like stools) you should discuss this with your GP.





### **What if my child is gaining too much weight?**

Check your child's weight and height in his/her red book. If your child's weight is moving significantly above his/her usual weight centile discuss your concerns with a Health Visitor or GP who may refer your child to a local dietitian in your area. Please also inform the EAT Study team. Encourage more exercise, reduce non-active hobbies (e.g. TV watching or computer games) and reduce intake of fatty and sugary foods and drinks.



### **What if my child is not gaining weight?**

Have a look at the growth charts in your child's red book. As long as your child's weight and height continue to follow his/her usual weight and height centiles, then your child is likely to be growing well. However, if you are concerned that your child is not gaining weight sufficiently discuss this with your Health Visitor or GP, who may refer your child to a local dietitian in your area. Please also inform the EAT Study team. Make sure you continue to offer your child well balanced meals but you may also need to fortify these meals using energy dense foods (for example by adding extra full-fat milk and margarine to mashed potatoes or sprinkling extra cheese on pasta dishes). Encourage your child to have small nutritious snacks between meals.

### **I suspect my child may have a food allergy, what should I do?**

If you think your child may have a food allergy please contact the EAT Study team. Possible signs/symptoms of an allergy may include; a runny or blocked nose, red and itchy eyes, dry, itchy throat and/or tongue, swelling of the lips and throat, coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath, itchy skin or rash; diarrhoea and /or vomiting.

### **How long should I continue to give my child the Eat Study foods? (Early Introduction Group only)**

We strongly encourage you to continue giving your child the EAT Study foods (dairy, egg, peanut, sesame, fish and wheat) in the EAT weekly guideline amounts. After 3 years of age it is down to parental discretion if you wish to continue giving your child these foods.

For children in the Early Introduction Group, we have an additional resource called "Follow On Tips and Recipes". Please refer to this booklet for the full range of options you can use for each of the EAT Study key foods to help give you more flexibility as well as recipe ideas. You can print a copy of this booklet from our website available at: [www.eatstudy.co.uk](http://www.eatstudy.co.uk) (under the "Links" section).

Thank you for your continued participation in the EAT Study!

**Questions or Comments?  
Contact the EAT Study Team at  
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