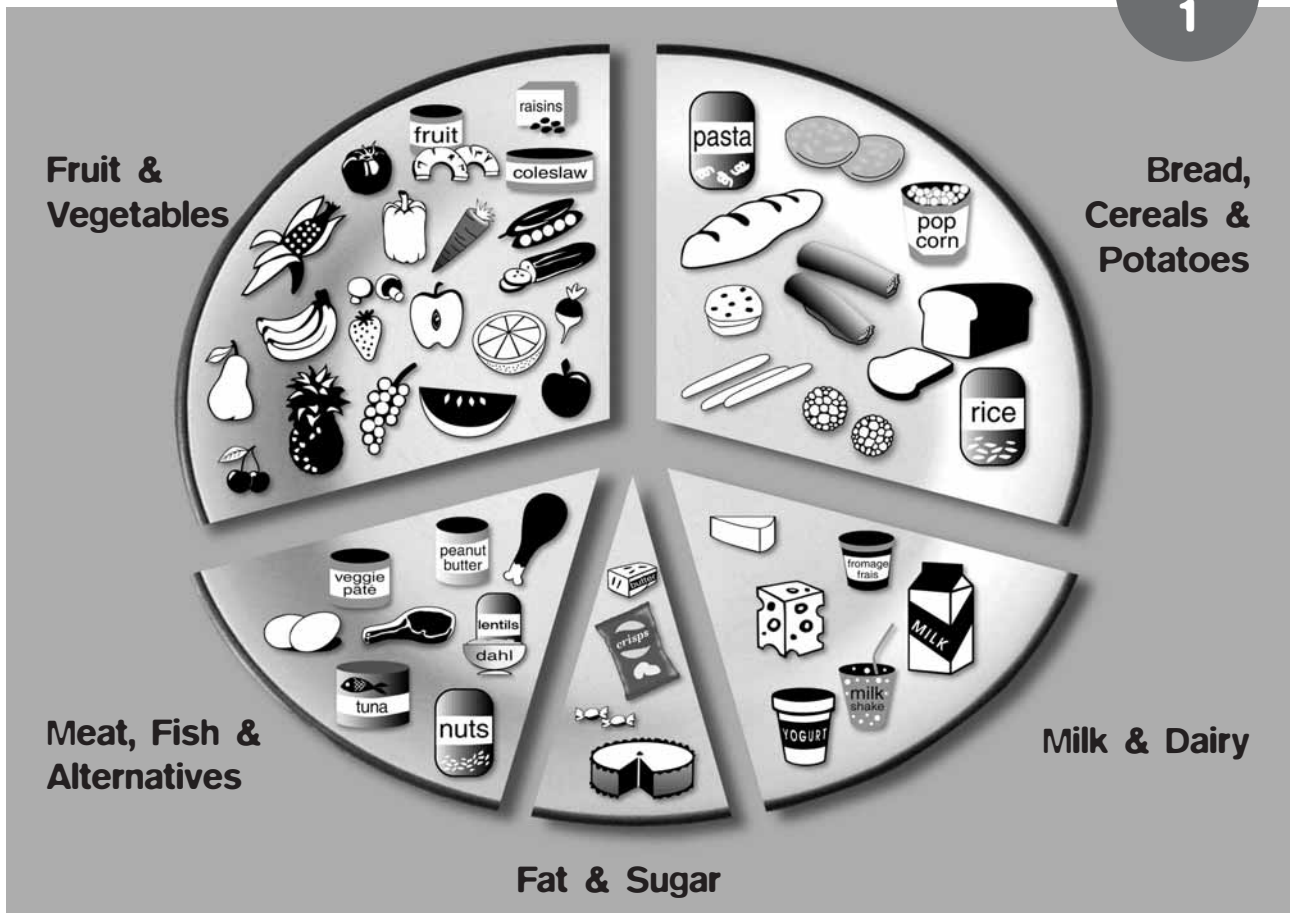


Getting the Balance Right

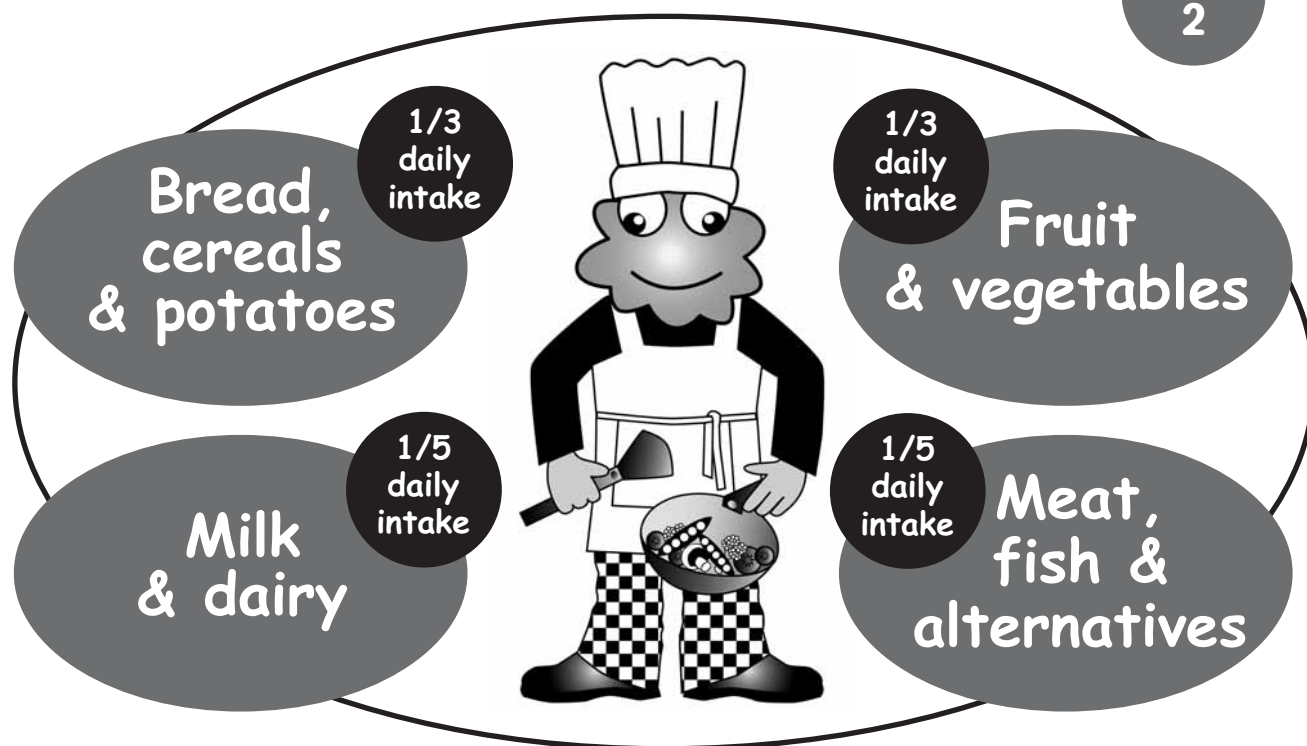


It is important to eat a variety of foods to give your body the essential nutrients it needs. The plate model above is based on the "Balance of Good Health" in line with government guidelines and illustrates the five food groups.

The following page explains the model in more detail. The size of each section shows the proportion we should be eating from each food group.

Eating a balanced diet

Healthy Eating
Factsheet
2



It is important to adopt healthy eating patterns from an early age as they are more likely to be maintained throughout life. There are four key food groups:

Bread, cereals & potatoes - these are carbohydrates and provide our bodies with energy. They should make up approx 1/3 of daily intake.

Fruit & vegetables - these provide us with vitamins and minerals which are essential in keeping us healthy (anti-bodies). They should make up approx 1/3 of daily intake. Remember 5 or more per day!

Meat, fish & alternatives - these are good sources of protein and iron, essential for healthy bones and blood. They should make approx 1/5 of daily intake. Remember eat fish at least twice a week! (At least one should be oily fish)

Milk & dairy - these are the best sources of calcium which are needed for healthy teeth and bones. They should make up approx 1/5 of daily intake. Remember 3 per day!

NB: Our bodies also need a small amount of fatty and sugary foods but these should be limited and not eaten at the expense of other foods e.g. fruit and vegetables.



Eating patterns and role models



Eating patterns

Numerous studies have shown that as a nation we consume too much fat (particularly saturated), sugar and salt, which can lead to many health problems later in life. Children are now developing illnesses previously only seen in later life, such as diabetes and obesity. This is down to our lifestyles and the food we consume plays a crucial part.

The food adults eat often reflects what they were given as children, as eating patterns are established at an early age, which is why it is so important to encourage children to adopt healthy eating as a way of life.

Role models

Apart from the people who purchase the foods that children eat, role models will often influence a child's eating habits.

If an adult says they don't like a particular food then the child will often do the same. Alternatively if a famous person they look up to advertises a certain product then they are more likely to want it.

How can adults encourage healthy eating?

- Lead by example - if a child sees a teacher/parent eating a packet of crisps and drinking a can of coke, healthy eating messages will have less of an impact.
- Avoid giving sweets as rewards, instead opt for fresh/dried fruit rewards.
- Be creative at special occasions when food is being shared and insist on healthy choices being available.

Remember: lead by example as often unconscious actions can have a huge impact both positive and negative. So make it a good impact!



Sugar - Fat - Salt



For the majority of the population our diets contain more sugar, fat and salt than is recommended. This can cause illness and disease both in the short and long term.

Sugar

A high sugar diet can lead to tooth decay and over a sustained period of time can increase risk of type 2 diabetes (diet related). Recent statistics show Type 2 diabetes (originally only developed in adulthood) being diagnosed at an alarming rate in children. Sugar provides us with empty calories (of no nutritional value). It creates a sudden energy rush but this quickly disappears and a slump in energy levels occurs. Therefore it is more beneficial to get our energy from foods rich in good carbohydrates such as bread, cereal and potatoes as they release energy slowly which reduces sugar highs and lows and provides essential nutrients.

Fat

A diet high in fat (particularly saturated fat) can lead to hardening of the arteries and weight gain which then, in turn, can lead to an increased risk of illnesses such as Coronary Heart Disease, Strokes and some Cancers.

Salt

A diet rich in salt (or sodium as it is sometimes known) can increase hypertension (blood pressure) which, in turn, is a risk factor associated with Strokes.

By taking action now we can reduce the risk of contracting these diseases; educating the future generations is especially important in fighting the rising trends of diet related ill-health.

For the first time in history some parents are expected to outlive their children.



Healthy eating



Healthy Eating does not have to be taxing. The golden rules are:

- enjoy your food
 - eat foods with higher sugar/fat/salt content in moderation
 - eat plenty of fruit and vegetables
 - eat lots of foods high in starch and fibre
 - eat a variety of foods to get all the nutrients you need
 - drink plenty of water
 - don't skip meals
-
- Remember - to avoid dehydration and improve concentration you should be aiming to drink 6-8 glasses of water (2 litres) everyday.
 - Remember - skimmed milk should only be given to children over 5 years old if they are eating a good varied diet and growing well. Semi-skimmed milk can be introduced to children of 2 years of age onwards if they are eating a varied and balanced diet and are growing well.



Breakfast



This should be an essential part of your daily routine and if eaten from an early age is likely to be continued into adulthood. Breakfast kick starts your metabolism after a night's sleep and without it you are asking your body to function without giving it any fuel (food) to do so.

Research has shown that people (both adults and children) who eat breakfast regularly perform better both at school and work.

Breakfast is claimed by many as the most important meal of the day.

The benefits of breakfast include:

- Waking up your body, preparing it for your daily functions ahead.
- Improves concentration.
- Reduces risk of accidents.
- Helps maintain healthy weight as skipping the first meal of the day may lead to an unhealthy pattern of snacking on high fat/sugary foods throughout the morning.

What type of Breakfast?

Breakfast is one of the easiest meals to get the essential nutrients that our bodies need in order to function effectively, eg. cereals with milk. Cereals provide us with fibre and many have added nutrients. Look out for the F symbol (fortified). Milk is also good for healthy teeth and strong bones. Therefore a high fibre cereal with milk and a glass of pure fruit juice or piece of fruit would be an ideal breakfast.

Other healthy options include:

- Toast with yeast extract, banana or cheese spread
- Boiled egg with toast fingers
- Fruit salads
- Fruit smoothies
- Yoghurts
- Experiment with different types of bread eg. bagels, teacakes.



Why healthy snacks?

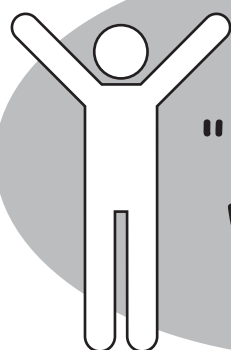


Snacks often have a bad reputation because as a nation we often choose the high fat, sugar, or salty varieties as a preference.

However if we chose snacks from one of the four main food groups (fruit and vegetables, bread and cereals, milk and dairy or meat, fish and alternatives) then snacks can be beneficial, especially to young children as they help maintain a steady blood sugar level.

When we consume high sugar products our blood sugar levels soar, giving us energy but this is short lived and we end up with a slump shortly after. If we have a more nutritious carbohydrate based product as a snack our bodies can break this down over a longer period of time, sustaining steady energy levels with no highs or lows.

Plenty of fluids is often just as important as snacks in order to avoid dehydration and aid concentration. Don't forget to drink plenty of water and milk, (necessary to build strong teeth and bones). These are the only two teeth friendly drinks so encourage them as first choices, plus remember that sugary or acid snacks should be avoided especially between meals as frequent consumption can cause tooth decay.



Remember

"...Have a hoot
with fruit..."



Healthy snacks - Practical ideas



Bread and Cereals

- Malt loaf, currant buns, fruit scones, tea bread
- Crumpets, bread sticks, rice cakes, crackers
(dipped in fromage frais, cheese spread or houmous)
- Unsweetened breakfast cereal e.g. Fruitbix
- Plain popcorn
- Plain or fruit filled biscuits e.g. rich tea, fig rolls or garibaldi
- Pasta salad

Meat, Fish and Alternatives

Below are ideas for toppings or fillings for different breads
e.g. pitta, rolls, wraps, crackers, crisp breads, toast fingers etc.

- Smooth peanut butter and sliced banana
- Chicken or tuna, mixed with sweetcorn, chopped peppers and low fat mayonnaise
- Ham or turkey and coleslaw made with low fat mayonnaise
- Grated cheese and grated carrot
- Mashed sardines or pilchards with cucumber
- Boiled egg mixed with low fat mayonnaise or fromage frais to bind

Fruit and Vegetables

- Fresh chopped fruit (save money by buying seasonal varieties)
- Tinned fruit in natural juice. This can be added to yoghurts or fromage frais or eaten on its' own.
- Dried Fruit e.g. raisins, dates or apricots etc.
- Chopped raw vegetables - sticks of carrot, slices of cucumber, strips of pepper, cherry tomatoes etc.

Milk and Dairy

- Individual pots of fruit yoghurt or fromage frais
- Cubes of cheese or mini cheeses
- Milk based fruit smoothies (soft fruits and milk pureed together form a nutritious drink)



Healthy lunchboxes



Lunchboxes are a crucial meal for children and it's important that they contain something from each of the four essential food groups:

- **Bread, cereals, rice or pasta** - foods that give us energy.
- **Fruit and vegetables** - provide vitamins and minerals needed to keep us healthy, particularly our immune and digestive systems.
- **Meat, fish and alternatives** - provide protein and iron necessary for growth, repair and healthy blood.
- **Milk and dairy products** - provide calcium essential for strong teeth and bones.

A variety of foods make lunchboxes more appealing and will also provide children with the essential nutrients they need to thrive. Children often eat with their eyes or, in other words, are more likely to eat something if they like the look of it. Therefore presentation of food is important. This includes colours, shapes and texture.

Lunchbox Fun

- Lunchboxes should be nutritious and enjoyable.
- Variety is key for getting all essential nutrients and ensuring boredom does not set in.
- Be creative, display food in fun ways (pick 'n' mix bags, kebabs on cocktail sticks, wraps etc) to encourage children to eat it.

Lunchbox Tips - Fresh is Best

- Always store lunch in fridge if prepared the night before.
- Include small ice packs to prevent food going off.
- Moist but not soggy sandwiches are best. Seal bags tightly or wrap in cling film.
- Fruit/Veg are fresher in a sealed bag or box with a lid. This also helps prevent spills.



Lunchbox examples:



Lunchbox 1

- Pasta with tuna, sweetcorn and peppers.
- Fromage frais
- Dried fruit e.g Pick 'n' Mix (apricots, raisins, dates. etc)
- Water

Lunchbox 2

- Bread sticks with hummus dip
- Cherry tomatoes and cucumber chunks
- Malt loaf
- Milk

Lunchbox 3

- Rice cakes with cheese spread
- Yoghurt
- Piece of fruit
- Pure orange juice

Lunchbox 4

- Chicken and pepper wrap
- Grapes
- Yoghurt
- Water

Lunchbox 5

- Ham and coleslaw roll
- Raw veg sticks (carrots, cucumber. etc)
- Flapjack
- Milk

Lunchbox 6

- Grated cheese and carrot pitta
- Fruit kebabs/salad
- Yoghurt
- Pure apple juice



Drinks



It is important that our bodies get plenty of liquid to keep us functioning properly, to avoid dehydration and aid concentration.

A large percentage of our bodies is made up of water and water is an ideal drink.

It is recommended that we drink at least 2 litres of water per day which is equivalent to 6-8 glasses.

Sugary drinks can contribute to tooth decay especially if they are consumed between meals. All fizzy drinks, even the diet drinks, contain acid which attacks teeth. Every time you put something sugary or acid in your mouth you have an acid attack.

Therefore if sugary drinks are given to children try to include these at meal times instead of sipping them over a longer period of time. In this way they are having one acid attack (complete meal) instead of a number of attacks and that helps to protect their teeth.

Milk consumption is on the decrease but it is vital for everyone especially children as they are growing and need it to increase bone density.

There are only two drinks which are fully tooth friendly. They are:

- Milk
- Water, plain or sparkling spring water

Other drinks which are kinder to teeth than fizzy drinks include:

- Very diluted, unsweetened pure fruit juices
- Very diluted sugar free squashes

