

# GOOD HEALTH FOR 1-5 YEAR OLDS

## What is good health?

### Eating well for children aged one to four years

A healthy, balanced diet and regular physical activity are essential for children's health when they are young, but also sets the foundations for their future health and wellbeing. Good nutrition is important for children to:

- Ensure they get the right amount of energy and nutrients needed to support growth, development, health and well-being
- Ensure they do not consume too many calories, which may lead to becoming overweight or obese
- Encourage children to eat a wide range of foods and develop healthy eating habits to take with them into later childhood and beyond.

A healthy balanced diet for children aged from one to four years is based on the four food groups listed below, which provide a range of essential nutrients that children need to grow and develop:

- Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates
- Fruit and vegetables
- Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins
- Dairy and alternatives

One of the basic principles of healthy eating is variety, as eating a wider range of different foods provides a better balance of nutrients. Between the ages of two and five years, children should make a gradual transition to follow the balance shown in the Eatwell Guide.

### Portion sizes

Portion sizes are based on the energy and nutrient requirements of children aged one to four years. However, remember that children's requirements for growth and activity, and their appetites will vary; they should be encouraged to eat healthy food according to their appetite.

### The EYFS Statutory Framework states:

3.48 – 3.50

**'Where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, they must be healthy, balanced and nutritious'**

**'...providers must obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies...'**

**'Fresh drinking water must be available and accessible to children at all times'**

## Physical Activity

Alongside a healthy diet, children need to take part in physical exercise. Physical activity includes all forms of activity, such as walking, active play and active games. Children are more likely to maintain a healthy weight if they are physically active for at least 180 minutes (three hours) each day, as recommended for children aged under five years in the UK.

## Drinks

NHS advice is that the best drinks to give children are milk and water.

- Whole fat milk for under 2s
- Semi skimmed milk for over 2s

The Nursery Milk Scheme enables registered early years settings to claim reimbursement for the cost of a third of a pint for each child aged under five years who attends for two or more hours a day. For more information, visit the Nursery Milk Scheme website.

## Oral Health

Dried fruit such as raisins, should be given with meals rather than as a snack as the sugar they contain can cause tooth decay. Your setting may or may not decide to brush children's teeth but providing children with an understanding of why oral health is important, through activities, discussions and visits to the dentist are essential to help promote children's good oral health habits.



## For more information

Healthier Families - Home - NHS  
[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Eat-Better-Start-Better1.pdf  
[foundationyears.org.uk](http://foundationyears.org.uk)

Example menus for early years settings in England: part 1  
[publishing.service.gov.uk](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)

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