

food & fitness

Getting the balance right
for your child



the right balance



The right balance ...a healthy diet for your child

A good diet can play an important part in a child's health and development. It can also give them the best chance of doing well at school.

Encouraging children to develop healthy eating habits when they are young will mean they are more likely to eat healthily as they grow up.

The 'Food and Fitness' Food Wheel shows the recommended balance of the five food groups:

- Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta or other starchy foods
- Fruit and vegetables
- Milk and dairy foods
- Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins
- Oils and spreads

Foods such as crisps, chocolate, sweets, biscuits and fizzy drinks are not part of the wheel because they are not essential to a healthy diet, and if they are included, they should be just a small part of what your child eats.

It is important for children to drink plenty of fluids. Water, lower fat milk and sugar-free drinks all count; it is recommended children drink 6-8 glasses a day.

food & fitness tip

Be a good role model. If children see their parents and other family members eating healthily and being active, they are much more likely to do the same.

start
smart!



...make some time for breakfast

School mornings can be hectic but it's definitely worth making time for the benefits of breakfast.

By breakfast time, most children won't have eaten for more than 10 hours so their bodies, and especially their brains, need refuelling.

Breakfast gives children's daily nutrient needs a boost too; providing them with some of the important vitamins and minerals they need for good health. At home or at the school breakfast club, it's a great start to the day.

**Not so
smart starts!**
one in ten
primary school
children
miss breakfast.

food & fitness breakfast tips

- 1 Including some fruit at breakfast time gets children off to a good start toward their 5-a-day fruit and veg target.
- 2 Wholegrain varieties of cereals & bread are the best for feeling fuller for longer and provide a slow release of energy.

- 3 Milk on cereal, in a smoothie or just as it comes will add extra protein, vitamins and minerals. Yogurt is a great choice too.
- 4 An occasional Ulster fry can be part of a healthy balanced diet - just not too often!

don't forget
about milk...



...cheese, yogurt and the dairy food group

The milk and dairy food group is an important part of a healthy, balanced diet. As well as containing calcium, milk, cheese and yogurt provide other valuable nutrients including protein and vitamin B12.

Calcium count-up:

Calcium is important for growing bones and including some foods from the dairy group in your child's diet each day can help them achieve their recommended intake.

A glass of milk (150ml)
A small piece of cheese (25g)
A pot of yogurt (125g)

} each provide around 1/3 of a 7-10 year old child's calcium needs

All the milk provided in NI primary schools is semi-skimmed but that doesn't mean missing out on calcium. Semi-skimmed milk has the same amount of calcium as whole milk.

food & fitness tip

Take advantage of the school milk scheme. The subsidised carton of semi-skimmed milk will provide around a quarter of your child's protein requirements and over 40% of their calcium needs.



Breaktime milk is a good choice for children's teeth; milk and water are recommended by dentists as the best choices for drinks between meals.



what's
cooking?

...getting kids involved in the kitchen

Here are some ideas for healthy snacks and meals that are quick and easy to prepare – older children could even make them for themselves!

Banana & Strawberry Shake (Serves 1)

100g low-fat natural yogurt 125ml semi-skimmed milk
1 medium banana, sliced 6 large strawberries, quartered

- Place all the ingredients into a blender
- Blend until smooth and creamy

Melon & Orange Smoothie (Serves 2)

1 melon wedge 200ml pure orange juice
200ml semi-skimmed milk

- Blend all the ingredients together until smooth
- Pour into 2 tall glasses

Quick Pizza

1 soda bread farl Pinch mixed dried herbs
2 tbsp tinned tomatoes Cheddar cheese, grated

Toppings:

chopped onion, mushrooms, sweetcorn,
pineapple, ham, tuna

- Cut the soda farl in half and toast
- Spread both halves with the tinned tomatoes and sprinkle with herbs
- Add your favourite topping
- Sprinkle some cheese on top
- Place under a hot grill until the cheese melts

Cheese Wrap

1 plain wrap 20g cheddar/other hard cheese, grated
20g low-fat soft cheese ¼ red pepper, finely sliced
1 tbsp sweetcorn 1 slice wafer thin ham, shredded

- Scatter the sweetcorn, pepper, ham and grated cheese over and roll up tightly.

Fruit Kebabs

strawberries pear
peaches banana
pineapple grapes

Salad Kebabs

cherry tomatoes sweet pepper
cucumber carrot
cheese

- For both kebabs, slice or cut salad/fruit into similar sized chunks & arrange into colourful patterns
- Thread onto skewers, 6 pieces on each

food & fitness tip

Involve children in the kitchen. Letting children help with cooking, and even with planning and shopping for meals, increases their interest in healthy eating and boosts their confidence and skills.



get active!

...feel great and have some fun

An active lifestyle is just as important as a balanced diet for a healthy body and mind. It's recommended that school-aged children should try to accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity* every day.

Being active can help your child:

- build strong bones and muscles
- boost energy levels
- increase self-esteem
- concentrate better
- deal with stress
- sleep well
- maintain a healthy weight
- benefit heart health

Unfortunately, most children don't do enough activity. The latest survey revealed that fewer than half of our children achieve the recommended one hour a day.

Exercise doesn't just mean playing sports; games like tag and skipping count too, and so do activities such as dancing, bike riding and skateboarding.

An hour of activity doesn't have to be done all at once; children can accumulate it in several smaller chunks of 10 to 15 minutes. Doing some activity that strengthens muscles and bones at least three times a week is important too. Examples include swinging on playground equipment, hopping and skipping, and sports such as gymnastics or tennis.

food & fitness tip

Limit screen time to less than two hours a day. Too much time sitting watching TV or using a computer or tablet means less time for children to be active

* 'Moderate activity' means something that is enough to make them feel warm and breathe a bit more heavily than usual like gentle bike riding or playground activities. 'Vigorous' is more intense causing a bigger increase in heart rate and breathing such as running or fast bike riding.

The Food and Fitness programme has been developed by the Dairy Council for Northern Ireland to help teach primary school children about the benefits of a balanced diet and an active lifestyle.



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