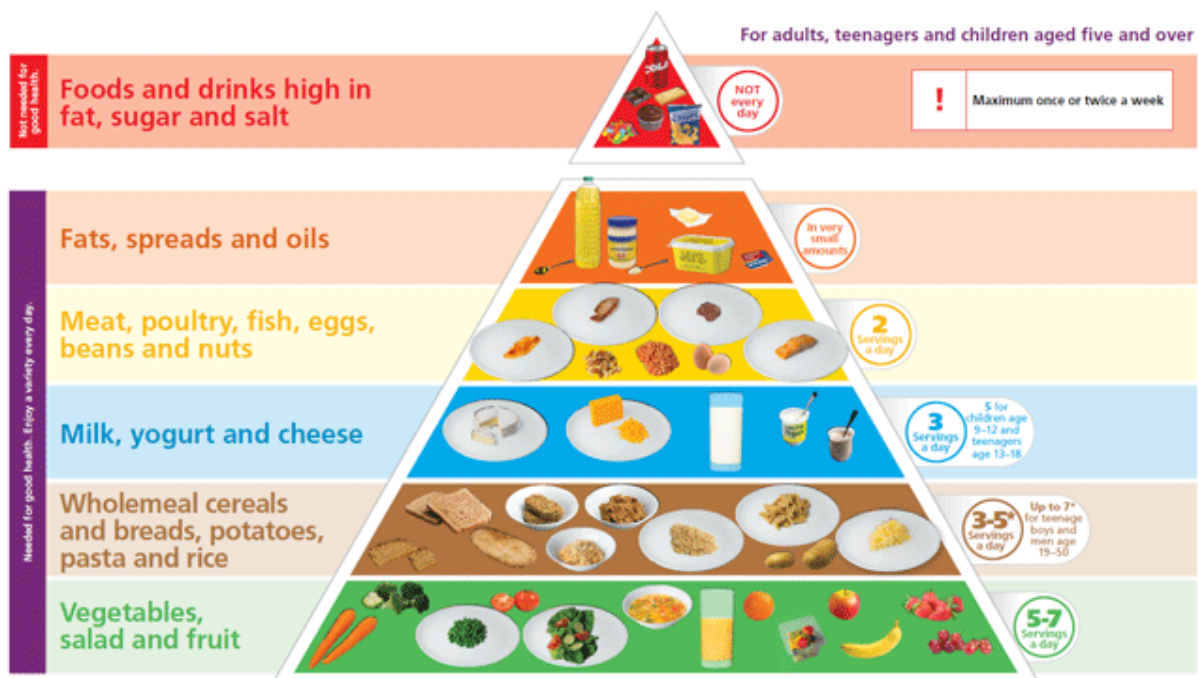


Nutrition Information: Families with Children

Nutrition is fundamental for good health and development during the early years of life. If children do not eat the right amounts of macronutrients like protein, fat, and carbohydrates and micronutrients like vitamin A, iodine, iron and zinc, they may become ill, have delayed mental and motor development that can have enduring adverse effects beyond childhood.

Eating the right amount of a variety of good foods can help children grow, learn, and play well. It can also help to reduce their chances of developing health conditions like heart disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer in later life.

You can use the food pyramid to plan meals and snacks for children over 5



One to five-year olds are always on the go and need a wide variety of foods for growth and health. Offer a range of different foods over the course of the week and your child is likely to get the nutrition they need. There is no need to cook special meals; use foods all the family enjoy.

The best way to ensure that your child is eating a balanced diet is to offer a wide range of different foods each day. To help make this task a little easier, the main foods in our diet can

be divided into food groups, as below. By selecting the right amounts from each of the food groups, you can meet your child's nutritional needs.

Fruit and vegetables

Are excellent sources of vitamins and minerals. If your child will not eat vegetables, offer more fruit instead, as both have similar nutritional values.

Recommended servings per day:

1-3 years: 2-4 servings

2-4 years: 4 or more servings

5 years onwards: 5 servings

One serving is:

1 piece of fresh fruit e.g. pear, banana, apple, orange

Half glass of fruit juice (dilute with plenty of water)

small bowl tinned or stewed fruit or fresh fruit salad

small bowl of homemade vegetable soup

Carrot, celery, pepper or cucumber sticks

2 tablespoons of cooked vegetables

3 dessertspoons salad

Raw vegetables are often popular with children; remember to wash and peel before eating. Frozen vegetables are as good as fresh.

Milk Cheese and Yogurts

These foods are the best source of calcium, which is essential for bone development. Three servings a day are recommended.

Suggested servings:

- 1 glass of milk (200 mls)
- 1 carton of yoghurt
- 25g (1 oz) of hard cheese (size of matchbox)
- 2 cheese singles
- 1 yoghurt drink or 2 fromage frais

Cheese, milk and yoghurt can be used in cooking without affecting the calcium content.

Custard, cheese on toast or pizza are popular ways to increase your child's calcium intake.

While milk is an important part of a child's diet the amount consumed should not exceed one pint a day as large quantities of milk may reduce appetite and prevent your child from eating a mixture of foods that are necessary at this important time in their growth and development.

Low fat milk is not a suitable drink for children under 2 years of age and skimmed milk is not recommended before the age of five.

Cereals Potatoes and Bread

These foods are high in carbohydrate and provide energy your child needs to be active and play. Include at least one serving at every mealtime.

Recommended servings per day:

1-3 years = 4 servings

3-5 years = 4-6+ servings

One serving is:

1 slice of bread

1 medium potato

1 small scone

1 small bowl of breakfast cereal

3 dessertspoons of cooked rice or pasta

Very high fibre diets can be too filling for young children and are not recommended.

Meat Fish and Alternatives

Meat, fish, poultry and eggs are good sources of protein which is essential for growth and development. Two servings a day are recommended. Pulses (peas, beans, lentils) also provide protein.

Suggested servings:

- one small lamb or pork chop
- 2 eggs
- 2 slices meat or chicken
- medium fillet of fish
- 6 tablespoons of beans peas or lentils

Children's appetites vary, offer smaller portions to younger children. They can decide on their own appetite so don't force them to clear their plates.

Iron

Recently in Ireland about one in ten two-year-olds were found to be anaemic (not enough iron in the blood). Red meat (lamb, beef, pork) and chicken are excellent sources of easily absorbed iron. The iron in meat is absorbed up to seven times more easily than the iron from vegetables, cereals and fruits. Meat also helps to increase the absorption of iron from vegetables eaten at the same meal. Children have high iron requirements and should be encouraged to eat meat on a regular basis (at least three to four times a week) to prevent the development of anaemia.

Sugary Foods, Fats and Oils

As children have small appetites it is important that they are not given sweets, biscuits, chocolate, salty snacks such as crisps and fizzy drinks on a regular basis. These foods have very little or no nutritional value and can spoil your child's appetite for healthy foods. Try to limit sweet foods to mealtimes and encourage your child to clean their teeth regularly to prevent tooth decay. Fast foods, chips, chicken nuggets, burgers and sausages are very high in fat and shouldn't be given regularly to children. Remember, you are starting habits of a lifetime, so it is really worth making that extra effort to provide your child with a healthy varied and enjoyable diet.

Some Tips for meal and snack times

- Try to create a relaxed atmosphere at mealtimes.
- Provide small, easy to handle portions and offer seconds; too much food on a plate may look unappetising.
- Introduce new foods along with a food you know your child likes; if the new food is refused try again a few weeks later.
- Make food look interesting, different colours and shapes appeal to children so combine a variety of colourful foods e.g. carrots, sweetcorn, potato and stew.
- Offer finger foods to younger children to allow them to feed themselves e.g. a stick of raw carrot, sliced apple, a cheese triangle or finger of toast.
- Involve your child in food preparation, shopping and washing up.
- In general, try to buy only the foods you want your child to eat.
- Don't worry if a child eats erratically.
- Never force your child to clear his/her plate or eat foods he/she does not like.
- Don't use one food as a reward for eating another.
- Don't give chopped or whole nuts to children under five because of the risk of choking. In families with a history of allergies (asthma, hay fever, eczema) additional advice regarding the introduction of nuts may be necessary. Consult your GP for advice

Below is a list of useful resources for nutrition for children of all ages:

- <https://www.safefood.eu/Healthy-Eating/The-Food-Pyramid-and-The-Eatwell-Guide.aspx>
- <https://www.bordbia.ie/nutrition/nutrition-for-the-one-to-fives/>
- <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/child-health/helping-your-child-to-eat-healthily.html>
- <https://www.indi.ie/>