

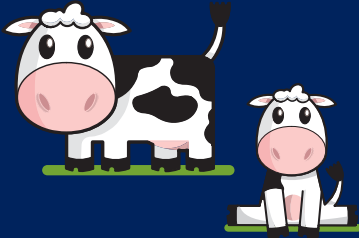


Dairy
Food for Life



A GUIDE TO
Nutrition
for Toddlers





Dairy Den

health and wellbeing programme for growing children

Your child's early years are a constant journey of discovery and the NDC's Dairy Den is here to help you along the way, answering all the questions you have in relation to diet and nutrition.

Our range of practical and easy-to-follow guides are designed to support your child's growth and development from weaning right through to the school-age years. This range of guides evolves in accordance with your child's stage of life: when you sign up to be part of the Dairy Den, we'll ensure the right information arrives on your doorstep just when you need it.

Dairy Den has lots of great advice to encourage healthy eating from a young age. We explain the nutrients critical to fast-growing bodies as well as why three portions of dairy a day are so important for overall health and wellbeing.

All Dairy Den information is science-based and supported by the most up-to-date research as compiled by the NDC, so from the first spoonfuls of food to the first tentative steps, just like your child, you'll know you're in safe hands.

The NDC Team

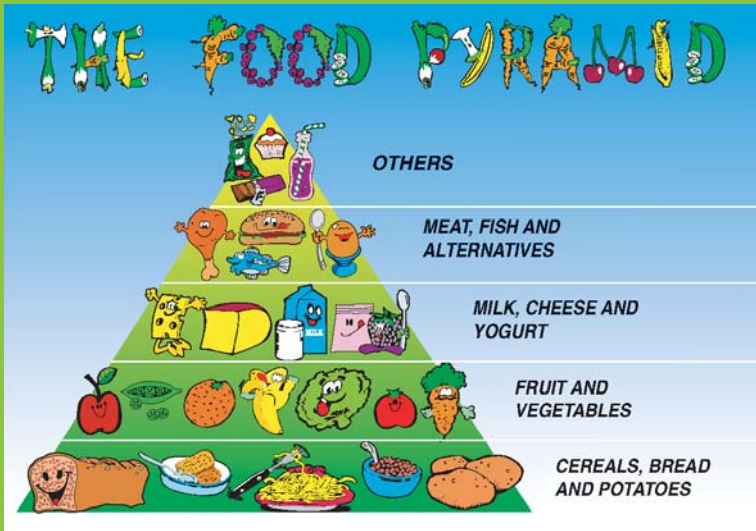


Introduction

Good nutrition is essential for healthy growth and development. However, knowing what to feed young children may often prove challenging. This booklet provides practical information on how to achieve a healthy, balanced diet for young children aged 1-5 years and advice on nutritional issues common to toddlers.

Suitable food choices for young children

A healthy, balanced diet involves eating a variety of foods in the correct amounts. The food pyramid can help - it categorises foods into groups and advises on how many portions from each group should be eaten every day. The Food Pyramid servings are suitable for children from about the age of five years. Younger children should start with smaller and fewer servings, increasing up to the guidelines recommended in the food pyramid in line with your child's own growth and appetite.



Below is a guide for toddlers. It is important to remember that this is only a guide and that children's appetites vary.

Bread, Cereals & Potatoes

The main role of this food group is to provide energy.

Wholemeal or wholegrain variations can help prevent constipation, but too much

fibre is not recommended for young children as it can fill them up quickly, thereby reducing their appetite for other foods.

It is recommended that children aged 1-3 years eat four servings per day, increasing to 4-6+ servings per day for children aged 3-5 years. Active children may need more servings from this food group in order to meet their energy requirements.

Examples of *one serving* are:

- 1 slice of bread or 1 small bread roll
- 1 small bowl of cereal (30g)
- 1 medium boiled or baked potato
- 3 dessertspoons of boiled rice or pasta

Fruit & Vegetables

This group provides vitamins and minerals which are essential for overall health and wellbeing.

It is recommended that children aged 1-3 years eat 2-4 servings per day, children aged 3-4 years eat four or more servings per day, and children five years and older eat five servings per day.

Examples of *one serving* are:

- 1 medium-sized fresh fruit e.g. orange, apple, banana
- 1 small glass of unsweetened pure fruit juice (dilute with water)
- 3 dessertspoons of fresh fruit salad or stewed or tinned fruit in natural juices
- 3 dessertspoons of salad or cooked vegetables
- 1 small bowl of homemade vegetable soup

Milk, Cheese & Yogurt

This food group provides calcium which is needed for normal growth and development of bone in children.

Whole milk is advised for young children. If your child is eating well, semi-skimmed milk may be gradually introduced from two years of age. However, skimmed milk is not recommended for children under five years.

It is recommended that children eat three portions of dairy foods per day.

Examples of *one serving* are:

- $\frac{1}{3}$ pint of milk
- 1 carton of yogurt
- 1 matchbox-sized piece of hard cheese (28g)



Meat, Fish & Alternatives

The main role of this food group is to provide protein. Protein is essential for healthy growth and development. This group also provides a number of other essential nutrients e.g. iron.

Remember, processed meat products tend to be of lower nutritional value, so choose unprocessed varieties.

It is recommended that children aged 1-3 years eat two small servings per day and children aged 3-5 years eat two servings per day.

Examples of *one serving* are:

- 1 pork or lamb chop
- 2 slices (60g) of roast, boiled, grilled or baked, lean meat
- 1 medium-sized fillet of fish
- 2 eggs
- 9 dessertspoons of baked beans, peas or lentils.

The Top-shelf

This food group includes foods which are high in fat and/or sugar e.g. sweets, biscuits, fizzy drinks, cakes and many savoury snacks. These foods should only be consumed occasionally and in very small amounts.

Fluids

Ensure your child drinks 6-8 cups (1200-1600ml) of fluid everyday; younger children should consume volumes at the lower end of this recommendation, increasing with age. 'Fluid' encompasses all drinks – water and milk are considered the most tooth-friendly drinks for children. If serving fruit juices, ensure they are unsweetened pure fruit juices and dilute with water.

Snacks for young children

Snacks are an important part of a child's diet as they help to meet their energy and nutrient requirements. Toddlers should eat three meals plus 2-3 snacks per day.

Suitable snack ideas:

Fresh fruit

Milk

Yogurt or fromage frais

Homemade smoothie using fruit and yogurt

Unsweetened breakfast cereal with milk

Cheese and crackers

Cheese - cut into manageable pieces

Bread, toast or small scone (plain, fruit or wholemeal)

Vegetables - cut into manageable sizes

Avoid whole nuts and popcorn until the child is at least five years old because of the risk of choking.

Nutritional issues common to young children

Fussy eaters

Many toddlers go through phases of fussy eating or may even refuse to eat at all. This is common among young children – so try not to worry. However, if the problem shows no sign of improving, or if your child is failing to thrive, seek advice from your GP or public health nurse.

What to do?

- Monitor what your child is eating. It may be that your child is having an 'off' day, or perhaps eating lots of small snacks throughout the day which will decrease their appetite and desire to eat at mealtimes.
- Monitor your child's fluid intake. Excessive fluid intake can cause your child to feel too full to eat solid foods. Some tips include: avoid drinks for one hour before mealtimes, and limit or delay offering a drink with a meal until the meal is half or even fully eaten.

- If your child refuses to eat certain foods, replace the food with an alternative choice from the same food group.
- Encourage regular mealtimes – three meals around the same time every day plus 2-3 snacks at regular times throughout the day.
- If your child refuses to eat meat, remember that many children prefer soft, moist meat, so try selecting lean cuts and serve with a sauce or gravy (avoid using salt). Try minced lean beef, turkey or pork – meatballs are typically enjoyed by children.
- If your child refuses to eat vegetables, try disguising them in homemade dishes such as casseroles, soups and rice dishes.
- If your child refuses to drink milk, try to use milk in cooked dishes such as sauces, mashed potatoes, custard and porridge. Encourage other dairy foods (i.e. cheese and yogurt). You can also easily incorporate these foods into many dishes such as lasagne or a homemade smoothie using yogurt.
- Try to make mealtimes relaxed, free from conflict or distraction.
- Avoid rushing your child to eat meals and snacks, but finish the meal after about 30 minutes as it is unlikely the child will eat much more.
- Do not offer treat foods as an alternative.
- Try to remain relaxed and calm. Do not force your child to eat. Offer gentle encouragement and give praise when food is eaten.

A healthy smile

Healthy teeth and gums are central to health and wellbeing, assisting us to eat, drink, talk and socialise. Children's first teeth should be cared for just as well as adult teeth.

Log onto the Dental Health Foundation's website for more information:

www.dentalhealth.ie

What to do?

- You should begin to clean your baby's teeth as soon as they appear in the mouth, initially do this by wrapping a piece of gauze/soft cloth around your finger and rub the teeth and gums gently.
- When the baby's molars (back teeth) appear around fourteen months, start using a small soft toothbrush with tap water.
- From the age of two years, start using a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Don't use toothpaste before two years of age.



- Supervise brushing twice daily (in the morning and at bedtime) until your child is seven years of age, helping when required.
- From the age of one year, children should be drinking from a cup or beaker without the lid, not from a bottle.
- Water and milk are the most tooth-friendly drinks. Nutrients in milk, namely calcium and phosphorus, contribute to the maintenance of teeth.
- If offering pure fruit juice, make sure it is well-diluted (1 part juice to at least 4-5 parts water) and choose unsweetened varieties. Avoid fizzy drinks, including diet varieties as both the sugar and acid content may cause harm to teeth.

Building strong bones

Childhood and the teenage years are important stages for bone development. Adequate calcium is essential during these growing years, and dairy foods are among the best food sources of calcium.

What to do?

- Ensure a healthy, balanced diet including three servings of dairy every day. Calcium requirements increase during the teenage years, therefore, teenagers are advised to eat five servings per day.
- Calcium is not destroyed by heat, so cooked dishes containing milk, cheese and yogurt retain the calcium.
- Incorporate these foods into the diet to suit individual tastes e.g. milk over cereal, cheese topping on a pizza, homemade smoothies, yogurt over fresh fruit salad, cheese sauce or white sauce.

Iron intake

Iron contributes to the normal formation of red blood cells. Insufficient iron intake can result in iron-deficiency anaemia. Symptoms include pale complexion, poor concentration, lethargy, irritability and increased risk of infection.

What to do?

- The best source of iron is red meat, so offer foods such as beef, lamb and pork. Poultry and fish (remove bones) also contain iron.
- Other sources include green leafy vegetables, fortified breakfast cereals, pulses and dried fruit. However, the iron in these sources is not as easily absorbed as iron from red meat. Foods containing vitamin C (e.g. citrus fruits, berries, green peppers and broccoli) can assist with the absorption of non-meat sources of iron. For example, offer a glass of orange juice with a fortified breakfast cereal or serve a boiled egg with a salad.
- Avoid tea or coffee as they can interfere with the absorption of iron.

Constipation

Constipation is a common problem and although it is usually nothing to worry about, it can cause distress and suffering. There are a number of dietary tips which can help treat or prevent constipation but if the problem is persistent you should seek medical advice.

What to do?

- Ensure your child is getting enough fluids - aim for 6-8 cups of fluid per day.
- Include foods with a higher fibre content in your toddler's diet such as wholegrain breakfast cereals, wholegrain rice, fruit and vegetables, pulses and dried fruit. Although fibre is an important part of your child's diet, too much fibre is not advisable for children as it can fill them up quickly affecting their intake of other nutritious foods.
- Physical activity can also play a role in managing constipation - so encourage your child to be active by taking part in sports, walking when possible or playing games.
- Ensure your child has enough time to go to the toilet, for example, in the mornings before school.

Healthy body weight

A healthy body weight is very important for the promotion of both immediate and long-term health. Encouraging a healthy diet and lifestyle from a young age is essential. Additionally, such habits learnt in childhood can continue into adolescence and adulthood.

What to do?

- Remember, prevention is better than cure, encourage your child to eat a healthy, balanced diet and be active from an early age.
- Choose healthy, nutritious options. Avoid foods which are high in calories and low in nutrients - 'empty calories'.
- Encourage your child to be physically active every day. Discourage a sedentary lifestyle e.g. spending too much time watching television. This type of lifestyle displaces physical activity and has been linked with poor eating habits.
- Some parents may be confused regarding the role of fat in a child's diet. Fat provides energy and is a carrier of the fat-soluble vitamins and essential fatty acids. During early weaning concentrated forms of energy are essential. Although milk (breast or formula) continues to contribute to fat intake during this stage of life, low-fat foods are not advised in the weaning diet. Excess amounts of fatty foods are also discouraged. However, as your child grows older their fat requirements decrease, and hence, low-fat options may be gradually introduced into their diet.



The National Dairy Council's packaging mark clearly identifies milk and cream products that have been farmed and processed within the Republic of Ireland. Purchasing products displaying this mark provides assurance that you are supporting thousands of Irish jobs.



The Fresh Milk Club provides an affordable, year-round daily supply of fresh milk to children in Irish schools. To ensure that your child or pupils are benefiting from this nutritious addition to their daily lunchboxes, contact the NDC for a free information pack.

www.thefreshmilkclub.ie



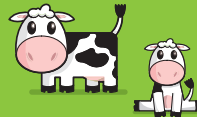
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