




Healthy Eating in the Early Years.
Our Approach to Nutrition.
A Guide for Parents (Birth to 5 years)

Why Healthy Eating Matters

 Children grow rapidly in the early years, and what they eat now shapes their health for life. This guidance explains that healthy food helps children “get the right amount of nutrients and energy they need while they are growing rapidly.”

Healthy eating supports:

- Good growth and development
- Healthy weight
- Strong teeth
- Positive eating habits that last

Feeding Babies (0–6 months)

Responsive feeding

Babies show you when they're hungry or full. Look for:

- Hungry: rooting, lip-smacking, turning towards the bottle
- Full: turning away, closing mouth, pushing bottle away

Never force a baby to finish a feed.

Breastfeeding

- Recommended exclusively for around the first 6 months
- Continue for as long as parent and baby wish
- We support breastfeeding and expressed milk

Infant formula

- Use first infant formula for the whole first year
- Prepare safely with sterilised equipment
- Use boiled water cooled to at least 70°C

Introducing Solid Foods (Around 6 months)

Signs your baby is ready

- Can sit upright with support
- Good hand-eye coordination
- Can swallow food

First foods

- Start with simple vegetable purées
- Move to mashed, lumpy and finger foods
- Offer a wide range of flavours
- It may take 10 or more tries for a baby to accept a new food

Finger foods

Good early options include:

- Soft-cooked veg sticks
- Soft fruit slices
- Soft strips of cooked protein

Drinks

Only:

- Breast milk
- First infant formula
- Water

Avoid juice, follow-on formula and toddler milks.

Safety When Weaning

Cut food safely

To reduce choking:

- Cut grapes, berries and cherry tomatoes lengthways into quarters
- Avoid round shapes
- Always supervise babies while eating

Foods to avoid



- Salt, sugar, honey (until age 1)
- Whole nuts, popcorn, raw jelly cubes
- Unpasteurised cheeses
- Sugary drinks
- Rice drinks

Children Aged 1–5 Years

 A balanced diet includes:

1. Fruit & vegetables
2. Starchy foods
3. Dairy or fortified alternatives
4. Proteins

Eating together encourages children to try new foods — even ones they refuse at home.

Food & Drink Guidelines

✓ **Fruit & vegetables**

- Offer at every main meal
- Avoid dried fruit as a snack

✓ **Starchy foods**

- Include at each meal
- Offer wholegrain options
- Limit fried foods to once a week

✓ **Dairy**

- 3 portions a day
- Full-fat for under-2s
- Choose unsweetened yoghurts

✓ **Proteins**

- Include at lunch and tea
- Offer variety
- Include plant proteins weekly
- Oily fish once every 3 weeks

  Drinks

Only:

- Water
- Plain milk

Avoid juice, squash and smoothies.

Portion Sizes

How much is enough?

- A toddler's portion \approx size of their clenched fist
- Start with small servings
- Let children ask for more if hungry

Avoid:

- Pressuring children to finish everything
- Using food as a reward

Special Dietary Needs

Allergies

Some reactions can be serious. The guidance notes that a severe reaction “is a medical emergency that can be life threatening.”

We always:

- Follow allergy action plans
- Prevent cross-contamination
- Know each child’s needs

Intolerances

Not dangerous but can cause discomfort.

Cultural & religious diets

We respect:

- Halal
- Kosher
- Vegetarian/vegan
- No pork or beef

Additional needs

Some children may need:

- Texture-modified foods
- One-to-one support
- A calmer eating environment

Food From Home & Celebrations

Packed lunches

We will/may ask for:

- Healthy choices as in our previous guidance (essential)
- Clear labelling
- No allergens (no nuts)

Celebrations

Instead of sweets:

- Fruit platters
- Stickers
- Bubbles
- Cultural foods

Cost-Effective Healthy Eating

Tips for families:

- Use frozen or tinned fruit/veg
- Choose value brands
- Batch cook
- Use beans and lentils
- Grow herbs or veg