FOOD FOR THE GROWING YEARS

Advice for feeding 1-5 year olds

Children need to eat a variety of foods for good health. Mealtimes should be fun and enjoyed by all.
Fruit and Vegetables

Try to give 4 - 5 servings a day.

- Vegetables may be eaten cooked or raw.
- Serve sliced salad vegetables with sandwiches.
- Offer sticks of salad vegetables with a sauce to dip into.
- Use fruit in puddings, fruit salad, crumbles and pies.
- Frozen and tinned vegetables and fruits can be as nutritious as fresh varieties.
- If vegetables are disliked, try adding to soups, casseroles or pizzas.

Do not overcook fruit and vegetables as this will reduce the vitamin content.
Cereal and Filler Foods

Serve with all meals.

- Encourage plenty of potatoes including jacket potatoes.

- Try wholemeal, granary and rye breads rather than white or brown, as they are higher in fibre. You can also try pitta bread, chapattis, muffins, bagels, crumpets and bread sticks.

- Many children enjoy pasta shapes served with meat, tomato or cheese sauce.

- Encourage vitamin and iron enriched breakfast cereals eg Weetabix, Shreddies, Cornflakes or Rice Krispies.

- Try the nutty taste of brown rice in savoury dishes as a change from white rice.
Serve twice a day. Convenience meals chosen carefully can make healthy meals. Many children prefer meat to be soft and moist. Try to serve foods with a gravy or sauce.

- Try minced beef, turkey, chicken, pork, shepherd’s pie, meatballs and spaghetti bolognese.
- Mashed sardines, tuna, cold meat, pastes, pates and peanut butter* are useful sandwich fillers.
- Pulse vegetables like lentils, chick peas and baked beans make good casseroles.
- Boned fish cooked in a sauce or ‘boil-in-the-bag’ fish are quick to prepare and make nutritious meals.
- Give grilled sausages, chicken nuggets, beefburgers or fish fingers.
- Offer boiled, poached or scrambled eggs on toast, or in sandwiches. Omelettes and eggy bread are different ways to serve eggs.

* If you or your child suffers from any allergies, hayfever, asthma or eczema, avoid giving peanut butter until the age of 3 years.
Dairy Foods

Aim for one pint of milk each day.

- Milk can be used in drinks, on breakfast cereals and in puddings or sauces.
- Cheese, fromage frais or yogurt can be given instead of some of the milk.
- Add cheese to jacket potatoes, spaghetti, savoury flans, or use in white sauce to make macaroni cheese, cauliflower cheese or egg mornay.
- Grated cheese, cheese spreads or cheese portions can be used as sandwich fillers or on toast.
- Offer yogurt as a pudding or snack between meals.
Meals
- Have regular meal times so your child is not too hungry or too tired to eat.
- Sit down and eat together so everyone can enjoy the meal.
- Offer a good variety of foods.
- Make meals colourful and interesting.
- Offer small portions of food on a small plate if your child is put off by large portions.
- Small children often prefer foods which are moist, so try serving meals with a sauce or gravy.
- Keep sweet foods out of sight until savoury foods have been eaten.
- Limit the mealtime to a maximum of 30 minutes.

Breakfast
- Breakfast is a very important meal as it is not good for your child to go for long periods without food.
- Breakfast cereal and milk, toast, crumpets or muffins are good choices.

Snacks
- Offer your child a small snack in between meals. This will help them to meet their needs for energy and growth.
- Avoid giving large snacks or snacks too close to mealtimes as you may reduce the appetite for meals.

Ideas for Healthy Snacks
- Fresh fruit eg pears, satsumas, banana, seedless grapes.
- Cheese cubes and crackers.
- Toasted wholemeal fingers/breadsticks.
- Small sandwiches.
- Raisins.

NB Do not give whole nuts to children of this age as they may choke.
Milk

- Give full fat milk to children under two years rather than semi-skimmed milk.
- After two years semi-skimmed milk may be given if your child is eating and growing well. Skimmed milk should not be used for children under the age of five years.

Sugar and Sweets

Try to limit the amount of sugar and sweets eaten. If they are given, offer at the end of meals rather than in between.

Additives

Only a very few children have reactions to additives in foods. Restricting foods unnecessarily can harm your child. If you think your child is intolerant to any food, please consult your doctor.

Constipation

- Give plenty of water.
- Give wholemeal bread instead of white or brown.
- Encourage high fibre cereals for breakfast, eg Weetabix, Shreddies, Shredded Wheat, Ready Brek, Porridge.
- Give plenty of vegetables, particularly baked beans, peas and sweetcorn.
- Encourage fresh fruit, eat the skin if edible.
- Do not use Bran for small children.

Vitamins

It is a good idea to give young children extra A, D & C vitamins in the form of Mother and Childrens Vitamin drops. These can be obtained from your health centre and given as instructed on the bottle.

Iron

It is important to offer iron-containing foods regularly. The best sources are red meat and other meats eg. chicken. Some iron is also found in green leafy vegetables, pulses and egg yolks. Iron is absorbed much better if the meal also includes a source of vitamin C, such as oranges, tomatoes, vegetables, fruit juice or vitamin C enriched drinks. Do not give tea with a meal as it reduces absorption of iron.