Food for the School Years
Advice for 5-16 year olds

A guide for families
To stay fit and healthy you need to choose a variety of the right types of foods to provide all the essential nutrients.

- Regular meals rather than grazing on snacks through the day usually gives a better balance of foods and nutrients.
- Eating a wide variety of foods provides more nutrients so have a main course and a pudding at lunch and for your evening meal.
- Eat together as a family and make meals fun social occasions.
- Convenience foods, chosen carefully, can be part of a healthy meal. Select those with lower amounts of salt, fat and sugar and serve them with extra vegetables and fruit.

### Breakfast

- Leave enough time for breakfast because concentrating on school work is more difficult if you haven’t eaten.

**Good choices include:**

- High fibre cereals e.g. Weetabix, Muesli, Cheerios, Shreddies and Shredded Wheat - with fruit and milk. Try fresh, canned or dried fruit.
- Boiled egg with wholemeal toast spread thinly with butter or margarine. Plus a glass of fruit juice or a piece of fruit.
- Porridge with milk and a glass of fruit juice.
- Toast with butter and jam or marmalade and a glass of milk or hot chocolate to drink. Instead of toast, try chapatti, crumpets, muffins or pancakes.

*If you are running late, have a sandwich and carton of milk or fruit juice on the way to school.*

### School meals

Try to make up your meal with something from each of the 5 food groups

- Have some meat, fish, eggs, beans, dahil or lentils. Pies, burgers and sausages are usually very high in fat so it is best not to have them every day.
- Choose at least one starchy food: pasta, rice, jacket potatoes, boiled potatoes, bread rolls or chapatti. Only have chips once or twice a week as they are too high in fat to eat every day.
- Always have at least one vegetable - cooked, raw or in salad
- A yoghurt, glass of milk or cheese will give calcium for growing bones.
- Choose a pudding with fruit or have a piece of fruit or a glass of fruit juice.
Packed lunches

Include something from each of the 5 food groups for a nutritious lunch.

- Choose different types of bread for more variety: sliced bread, bread rolls, pitta bread, chapatti, naan, bagels, baps, baguette, crispbread, crackers and tortilla wraps. Wholemeal, granary and wheatgerm varieties have more fibre.

- Popular sandwich fillings are ham and tomato, tuna and cucumber, cheese and pickle, egg mayonnaise and cress, chicken and salad, hummus and peppers. Low fat mayonnaise and spreads keep the fat content down.

- Alternatives to sandwiches are pizza slices, pasta or rice salad, samosas, slices of quiche or bread sticks with cheese and vegetable sticks.

- Include vegetables in sandwiches or as a salad or add some cherry tomatoes, carrot or celery sticks.

- Include fruit, or fruit juice and a pudding such as yoghurt, fromage frais, a biscuit, small slice of cake, cereal bar or a piece of chocolate.

- Always have a drink.

Snacks

- Most children and teenagers need 1 or 2 snacks as well as 3 meals each day.

- Sandwiches, yoghurt, breakfast cereals with milk or fruit are good choices because they will give you energy and nutrients. Eat these rather than crisps, chocolates, sweets and fizzy drinks which contain a lot of fat, salt and sugar but very few vitamins or minerals.

Drinks

- 6-8 drinks each day and more in very hot weather will keep you well hydrated and feeling good. Water and milk are best as they do not damage your teeth. Pure fruit juice has more nutrients than ‘fruit juice drinks’.

- The acid in juices, squashes and fizzy drinks damages teeth when they are drunk on their own. If you have them with meals or snacks the damage is much less.

Iron

- You need iron-containing foods regularly. Teenage girls need the most.

- The best sources are red meat and other meats including pork and chicken. Some iron is also found in pulses, beans, nuts, egg yolks and oily fish - sardines, mackerel and salmon. There is also a small amount in dark green leafy vegetables. Some breakfast cereals have added iron.

- Iron is better absorbed from meals including fruit and vegetables high in Vitamin C - oranges, tomatoes and fruit juice are particularly high.

- Drinking tea with meals reduces the amount of iron absorbed from food.
Food Groups

Eating a combination of foods from all the food groups will give you everything you need.

Putting most foods into the food groups is easy. But some foods are made up of ingredients from more than one group. For example, spaghetti bolognese has meat and vegetable ingredients from the meat and alternative group. It also has tomatoes and tomato sauce from the fruit and vegetable group and cheese from the dairy group.

As well as energy, the nutrients you need each day are protein; vitamins; minerals such as iron, calcium and potassium; and phytochemicals.

Fruit and vegetables

Always have fruit and vegetables at every meal and aim for at least 5 servings a day. Fruit and vegetables give you Vitamins C and A, fibre, flavanoids and some have a little iron.

Tips:

- Have a wide range.
- Avoid overcooking vegetables as this destroys some of the nutrients. Cook them in a small amount of water and for a short time so they are still ‘crisp’ when served.
- Don’t soak vegetables in water as some of the nutrients, such as Vitamin C, float away.
- Frozen fruit and vegetables are usually just as nutritious as fresh.
- Choose tinned vegetables without added salt.
- Stir fried or roasted vegetables, using very little oil, are usually more popular than boiled vegetables.
- Have sliced salad vegetables with sandwiches, picnics and packed lunches.

- Sticks of raw vegetables with a sauce to dip into makes a great snack.
- Always choose a pudding with fruit or eat fruit with your pudding e.g. strawberries go well with cake.
- Another way of having vegetables is to add them to pizzas, burgers, soups, stews and casseroles.
- Dried fruit is good with breakfast cereals and in puddings and cakes. It can damage your teeth, like sweets do, if you eat it on its own as a snack.
Bread, other cereals and potatoes

Have at least one food from this group with each meal. They include: breakfast cereals, bread, chapatti, pasta, rice, couscous, millet, potatoes, yam and green banana. Foods made with flour e.g. pizza bases, buns and pancakes are also in this group.

These foods give you plenty of starch (carbohydrates) for energy. They also give you B vitamins, fibre and some iron and zinc.

Tips:
- Choose breakfast cereals with added vitamins and iron e.g. Cornflakes and Rice Krispies. Wholegrain varieties e.g. Weetabix, Shreddies and Cheerios have more fibre as well.
- Oat cereals e.g. muesli and porridge are high in iron and also fibre and give you energy right through the morning.
- Have wholemeal, granary and rye breads as well as white as they are higher in fibre. You can also try pitta bread, chappatis, muffins, bagels, crumpets and bread sticks.
- Have pasta shapes with meat, tomato or cheese sauce.
- Try the nutty taste of brown rice in savoury dishes as a change from white rice.
- Have potatoes baked, boiled, mashed or try a jacket potato with a filling. Eating the potato skins gives you more fibre.
Meat, fish, eggs, dahl, pulses and nuts

Have foods from this group twice a day. These foods give you protein, iron, zinc, magnesium, B vitamins and Vitamin A. Some give you omega 3 fats.

Tips:
- Lean meat with the visible fat cut off before cooking will be lower in calories than fatty meat but will still have all the nutrients.
- Use lean minced beef, turkey, chicken, pork or lamb to make burgers, meatballs, meat loaf, bolognaise sauce or shepherd's pie.
- Chicken and turkey skin has a lot of fat, so leave it out or don’t eat it.
- Put tuna, cold meat, pastes, pates, mashed sardines, hummus or peanut butter in sandwiches or on toast.
- Pulse vegetables such as lentils, chick peas, red kidney and baked beans make good curries and casseroles.
- Fish is quick and easy to cook. If you have fish in batter, it is only the batter which is very high in fat, not the fish.
- Oily fish contains omega 3 fats which are good for the brain. Have oily fish such as salmon, fresh tuna, mackerel, pilchards and sardines once or twice a week.
- Sausages, chicken nuggets, burgers and fish fingers are popular but choose those lower in fat and salt or make them yourself. Grill or bake them rather than frying.
- Eggs can be boiled, poached or scrambled. Omelettes and eggy bread are different ways to serve eggs.

Foods high in...

These foods should be eaten only in moderation as they are high in calories but have no fibre. If you eat too many of these foods you will become obese. This can cause diabetes.

Foods in this group include cooking and salad oils, mayonnaise, jams, marmalades, sweet spreads, sweets, biscuits, cakes, ice cream, soft drinks, sweets, jam, syrup and other high-fat spreads and oils choose some with less fat such as walnut oil, rapeseed oil.

Tips:
- Spread butter and margarine very thinly.
- Frying foods in fat or oil are less healthy than baking or steaming foods.
- If you have ice cream, biscuits and savoury snacks choose them small portions and add a more nutritious pudding.
- Have sweets and chocolate as a treat rather than in between meals so that they do not damage your teeth.
- Try your drinks without adding sugar, which adds extra calories and not.

Milk and dairy foods

Have three servings of milk, yoghurt or cheese each day.

These foods give you protein, calcium, B vitamins and iodine.

Tips:
- Milk is a great drink as it doesn't damage your teeth. Try it plain, flavoured or in a milkshake. Try yoghurt drinks.
- Have milk on breakfast cereals as a snack.
- Skimmed and semi skimmed milk have less fat and calories than full fat milk but have the same amounts of protein, calcium and most other nutrients.
- Have yoghurt or fromage frais as a pudding or snack between meals. Use them in place of cream.
- Try paneer in curries or have yoghurt with curry.
- Grated cheese, cheese spreads or cheese portions can be used as sandwich fillers, on toast or as a snack.
- Add cheese to jacket potatoes, pasta, savoury flans, or use it in white sauce to make macaroni cheese and cauliflower cheese.

Fat & sugar

Eaten in small amounts, they are very few nutrients. Eating may make you overweight or get diabetes and heart disease.

Butter, margarines, yonnoise, cheese, crisps, cream, pastries, fizzy and sugar. When using fats, high levels of omega 3 fats oil and olive oil.

Sprinkle very thinly. It adds extra calories. Grilling, doesn't.

Crisps or a piece of cake make adding some fruit to make a snack. It ate at the end of a meal rather to that they do not damage 
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