Healthy Eating

For Primary School Children
Food provides energy and nutrients which we need to stay healthy. No single food contains all the nutrients needed, so eating a mixture of foods will help you to get the right amount. The Balance of Good Health represents the types of foods and the proportions in which you need to eat them to have a well balanced, healthy diet. Foods that are eaten as snacks and between meals count as well as food eaten at mealtimes.

Fruit and Vegetables
Fruit and vegetables provide essential vitamins, minerals and fibre. Have at least five portions every day.

Meat, Fish and Alternatives
Such as nuts, pulses and eggs. These foods provide us with protein, iron and B-vitamins. Have two to three portions a day.

Foods Containing Fat
Fatty foods are high in calories and most are high in saturated fat which is bad for your heart. Eat small amounts.
Starchy Foods

Such as bread cereals, potatoes, pasta, rice, chapati, naan, yam, cassava, plantain

These foods form the basis of your diet. It is best to fill up on plenty of these at each meal. They provide energy, B-vitamins, iron and fibre.

Have at least five portions a day.

Foods Containing Sugar

We enjoy sugary foods as treats, but try not to eat these too often and when you do, have small amounts. Keep to mealtimes.

Milk and Dairy Foods

These foods provide protein and calcium for strong bones and teeth.

Have two to three portions everyday.
Always leave enough time for breakfast. It is not a good idea to go to school without anything to eat as it may be difficult to concentrate on school work later in the morning.

Here are some ideas:

• High fibre cereal e.g. Weetabix, Bran Flakes, Shreddies or Mini Shredded Wheat with dried fruit or a banana and semi-skimmed milk.

• Boiled egg with wholegrain toast spread thinly with low-fat spread or margarine.

• Fresh orange juice, porridge or Ready Brek with semi-skimmed milk.

• Wholemeal toast, low-fat spread or margarine and marmalade or jam (reduced-sugar varieties of these are available). You could also have fruit juice with this.
A good hot meal in the middle of the day helps to keep you going in the afternoon. When you choose your meal, try not to fall into the trap of eating chips and cakes every day as this will not provide a balanced diet. To help you choose a more nutritious meal try always to:-

• Have at least one portion of vegetables. This may be raw or cooked.

• Have a piece of fruit after a main meal - either fresh, dried or tinned in fruit juice.

• Have a protein-rich food. This may be meat, fish, eggs, cheese, beans or lentils. Try not to have processed foods like chicken nuggets, burgers or sausages every day, as these are very high in fat and salt.

• Choose at least one starchy food at each meal which will help to fill you up, e.g. bread, jacket potatoes, boiled potatoes, pasta or rice. Chips can be eaten occasionally but are too high in fat to eat every day.

• Have a portion of dairy foods, such as low-fat milk or yoghurt.
Always include fruit and/or vegetables and a starchy food in your packed lunch.

To add variety use different types of bread for your sandwiches, e.g. wholemeal bread, granary rolls, pitta bread, high fibre white bread, tortilla wraps, crackers, crispbreads, bagels, baps or crusty rolls.

High-fibre foods can help fill you up and prevent constipation. However, young children should avoid having them at every meal because they only have small stomachs and may not get the energy and nutrients they need from these bulky foods.

**Tips for sandwich fillings**

**Poultry/meat** - use lean cooked meats e.g. chicken, ham.

**Cheese** - try different ones, especially the lower-fat varieties and cottage cheese.

**Eggs** - hard boiled and sliced in a sandwich or alone.

**Fish** - tinned tuna, sardines (drained of oil or in brine).

**Pulses** - home made or bought lentil or bean paté.

Add to any of the above: lettuce, cress, tomatoes, peppers, radishes, beansprouts; or put some salad in a sealed container.

Use sticks of celery, carrots, cucumber or radishes to add a crunchy texture.

Cold chicken or turkey portions, savoury flans, pizza portions, are
all suitable alternatives, together with salad and bread.

At least one protein food, e.g. meat, cheese, eggs, fish or pulses should be included in a packed lunch. You could occasionally use peanut butter as an alternative. (Some schools do not allow this because of allergies, so check this first.)

**FRUIT**
Pack some fresh fruit or fresh fruit salad in a sealable container or try dried fruit for a change.

**YOGHURTS**
Choose low-fat ones (but watch the sugar content) or use natural yoghurt and add your own fruit.

**CRISPS AND SAVOURY SNACKS**
Use only occasionally as these are high in fat - low-fat varieties are slightly better, but still a high fat food.

**CAKES AND BISCUITS**
Use more wholemeal varieties. Try fruit cake, scones, tea cakes and fig rolls.

**DRINKS**
Unsweetened fruit juices in cartons make a useful portable drink. Vitamin C helps the absorption of iron from food.
Choose low calorie or “diet” varieties of fizzy drinks to avoid too much sugar, and only have them occasionally.

Try to have plenty of variety in your packed meals and be adventurous, trying different foods and combinations to make lunches more interesting.
Try these ideas for healthier eating in order to cut down on fat. Try eating more foods that are grilled, baked, steamed, boiled or microwaved instead of fried.

Use skimmed or semi-skimmed milk instead of whole milk. There is just as much calcium but much less fat.

Low-fat spreads are recommended instead of butter or full fat margarines. Aim for 40g or less fat per 100g.

Try low-fat cheeses. Cottage cheese has the least fat. Half fat cheddar cheeses are the next best, followed by lower-fat cheeses, such as ‘Lite’ cheese spreads, Edam, Brie, Shape, Tendale.

1 Jacket potato - add your favourite filling such as tuna, grated cheese, baked beans, cottage cheese, chopped hard boiled egg, chopped ham, sweetcorn. Try and avoid adding margarine.

2 Scrambled egg and mushroom with toast.
onion, mushroom, chopped ham, mashed tinned fish. Sprinkle with herbs (if liked) and a little grated cheese, and grill.

8 Ploughman’s tea - wholemeal roll or scone, with cubes of cheese, pineapple, tomato, cucumber, apple, carrot etc.

9 Poached egg in a potato nest with some colourful vegetables or salad.

10 Savoury rice (with peas, sweetcorn etc.) served with grilled chicken.

11 Stir-fry tuna / bacon / chopped ham etc. with vegetables, served with pasta.

12 Wholemeal pasta with tomato and vegetable sauce, add some lentils for protein.

13 Filled pitta bread, e.g. with tuna/chicken/ham/lower fat cheese and salad.

14 Fish and potato pie topped with sliced tomatoes, served with a green leafy vegetable.

15 Kedgeree - mix flaked fish (usually smoked haddock) chopped hard boiled egg, rice, served with colourful vegetables.

16 Chapati/roti with dahl and salad.

17 Vegetable or meat curry with rice and salad.
If you need to eat between meals, try one of these:-

- Fresh fruit - apple slices, orange segments, banana, seedless grapes.
- Washed and chopped raw vegetables, e.g. carrot, celery, cucumber, tomato.
- Wholemeal bread or toast - with savoury spread such as Marmite, peanut butter or vegetable paté.
- Savoury cracker, bread sticks or matzos.
- Fruit cake, scone - plain, or cheese.
- Teacake or crumpet.
- Malt loaf.
- Slice of pizza.
- Plain, home-made popcorn.
- Breakfast cereal with semi-skimmed milk.
It is important that you drink throughout the day. Try to have 6-8 cups every day.

- Water, mineral water.
- Milk (preferably semi-skimmed).
- Milk shake - try liquidising semi-skimmed milk with soft banana or strawberries (in season).
- Unsweetened fruit juice - try diluted with low calorie lemonade.
- Sugar free squash, low-calorie fizzy drinks.
- Keep fruit juices and fizzy drinks to meal times only. Even low sugar varieties can damage teeth, because of their acid content.

Milk and water are the only drinks recommended for between meals.

EXERCISE

As well as eating healthy it is important to get plenty of exercise.

Walking is an excellent form of exercise. Walk as much as possible e.g. to school or to the local shops.

Play outside as much as possible e.g. at the local park or in the garden. If the weather is bad try your local sports centre or play centre, e.g. ‘Wacky Warehouse’.

Get involved in school sport activities and after-school sports clubs.

Aim for at least one hour of physical activity every day.
Encourage relatives or friends to buy small presents of books, comics, pencils or other non-edible gifts instead of sweets and chocolate.

- Keep sweets or chocolates to once or twice a week.
- Avoid supermarket checkouts with sweet stands.
- Try to avoid giving sweets as a reward.
- The best time for sweets is after a meal.
- Have a bowl of fruit on the table for easy access.
- Take fruit on the school run, for those hungry moments after the school day.
- Limit chips to once or twice a week. Use lower-fat oven chips.
- Whole nuts should not be given to children under five.
- Do not demand that food is eaten up at mealtimes.

It is helpful if everyone at home eats a similar diet. This is healthier for the whole family. Eating as a family can encourage fussy eaters to eat more.