

Back to School 2014

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Back to
School



It's that time of year again....back to school 2014!

Time to start setting the alarm clock a little earlier, establish routines, and make sure the children get to school on time.

One of the best ways to give children a healthy start to the day is to ensure that they are eating well. Food habits and attitudes towards eating developed in early childhood can affect children's health and wellbeing both when young and later as adults. What children eat is important for healthy growth and development and how they eat is important for setting up healthy attitudes towards eating and helping to prevent behavioural problems and possible overeating.

Children need healthy food

- To get all the nutrients they need for good health and vitality.
- For optimal growth and development.
- To improve concentration and behaviour.
- To prevent a number of immediate health problems such as iron deficiency anaemia, poor weight gain, constipation and tooth decay.
- To help fight illnesses such as colds and improve wound healing.
- To help prevent lifestyle diseases such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes, some cancers and osteoporosis.

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, so don't rush and don't skip it.

Some Benefits of Breakfast

- Eating breakfast helps children and adults concentrate better, which improves school and work performance.
- Children and adults who eat breakfast are less likely to overeat later in the day, which can help with weight management.

Some Breakfast Tips...

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- **Have some protein.** Enjoy some milk, yogurt, cheese. You'll be less likely to feel hungry mid-morning.
- **Choose your cereal wisely.** Read and compare Nutrition Facts labels. Added Sugars can include any name ending in 'ose' (e.g. fructose) or 'ol' or 'syrup' (e.g. glucose syrup), honey, disaccharides, monosaccharides or malt extract. Choose high-fibre, whole-grain cereal, such as oatmeal, and with no added sugar. Add naturally sweet raisins or dried cranberries.
- **Aim for variety!** Include three or four different food groups in your morning meal. People who have fruit for breakfast are more likely to meet the daily goal.
- Cereal with sliced bananas and low-fat milk; orange juice*
- Oatmeal with raisins and low-fat milk
- Scrambled eggs and toast, fruit, and a glass of low-fat milk*
- Whole-wheat toast with sliced bananas; orange juice
- Unsweetened pancakes with sliced fruit, and a glass of low-fat milk*
- Fresh Fruit and natural yogurt

*Please see section for toddlers and children

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Best drinks for **toddlers and children** are tap water and milk.

Tap Water....

- It's cheap, freely available and has no sugar, artificial colourings or flavourings.
- Helps protect against tooth decay.
- Most children enjoy water if they get into the habit of drinking it at an early age.

Reduced-fat milks are not suitable for young children under 2 years, because of their high-energy needs, but reduced-fat varieties should be encouraged for older children and adolescents.

Large quantities of juice can cause tooth decay, reduce appetite and lead to diarrhoea due to its high concentration of natural sugars. Children don't need any juice (just offer water). If you offer juice use 100% juice varieties and give no more than ½ cup per day. Dilute it to 50:50 with water and serve it in a cup not a bottle.

Other sweet drinks such as cordial, soft drink, sports drinks and flavoured milks are high in sugar and contain little other nutritional value. They are not needed as part of a healthy diet.

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods

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Children and adolescents should be encouraged to:

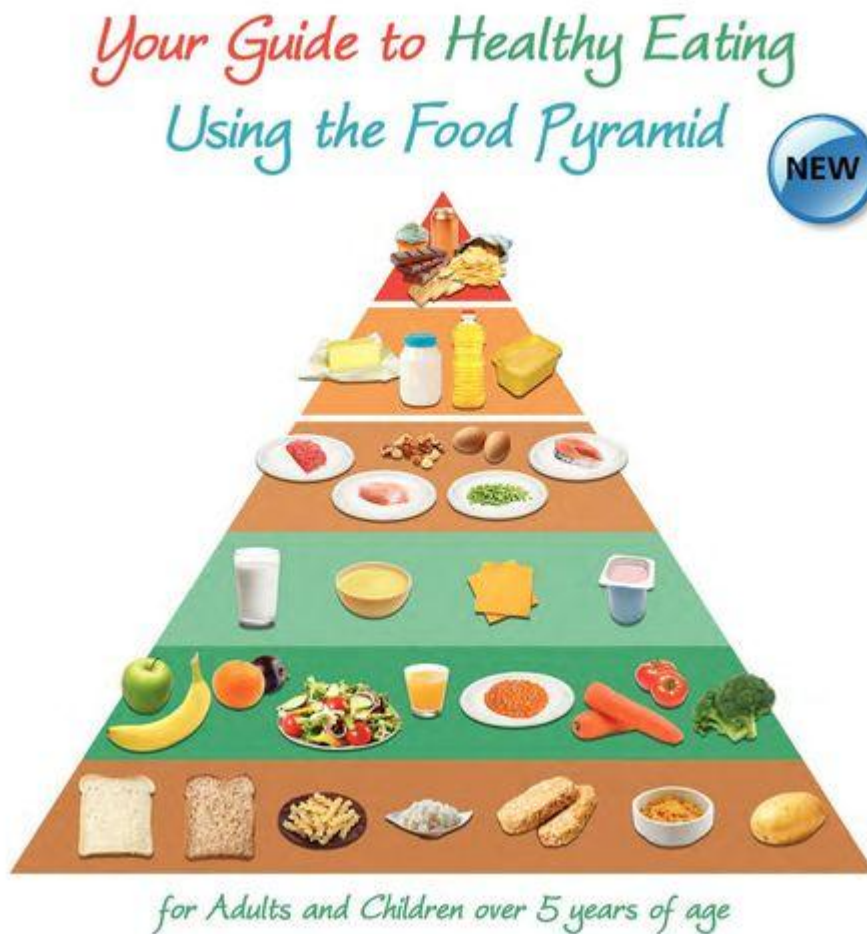
- Eat plenty of vegetables, legumes and fruits
- Eat plenty of cereals (including breads, rice, pasta and noodles), preferably wholegrain
- Include lean meat, fish, poultry and/or alternatives
- Include milks, yoghurts, cheeses and/or alternatives. Reduced-fat milks are not suitable for young children under 2 years, because of their high-energy needs, but reduced-fat varieties should be encouraged for older children and adolescents.
- Choose tap water as a drink
- Limit saturated fat and moderate total fat intake. Low fat diets are not suitable for infants
- Choose foods low in salt
- Consume only very small amounts of sugars and foods containing added sugars

Children should be encouraged to eat whole fruits rather than fruit juice or dried fruit to meet their daily fruit intake. Whole fruits contain more fibre than fruit juice and less concentrated sugar than dried fruits.

A Healthy Lunch Guide for Parents and Guardians

Healthy eating can be fun. Remember, a good lunch can go a long way to keeping your children healthy.

A healthy lunch should include foods from the four main shelves of the food pyramid <https://www.healthpromotion.ie/hp-files/docs/HPM00796.pdf>. Make lunchtime more fun by trying some of the ideas mentioned below.



Breads and cereals shelf

These foods help provide us with energy.

To make sandwiches more fun - cut them in different shapes and mix brown and white bread. Don't forget to use rolls, crispbreads, french sticks, crackers, pitta bread or scones to give variety. Sandwich fillings can come from the different shelves of the food pyramid.

Fruit and vegetable shelf

The foods from this shelf provide us with vitamins, minerals and fibre. Try and use something from this shelf in a sandwich such as banana, or salad with tomatoes, peppers, carrot and celery sticks. On cold days, why not try a flask of soup? Remember to include a piece of fruit. Fruits such as mandarin oranges and bananas are easy for children to peel.

Milk, cheese and yogurt shelf

A cheese sandwich or cheese and crackers, yogurt or homemade milk shakes (without added sugar) can help provide important calcium for healthy bones and teeth. Desserts like rice pudding and custard can also be a source of milk.

Meat, chicken, fish and egg shelf

These foods are important for growth and for iron. Choose from chicken, turkey, eggs ham, tuna, salmon and sardines.

Top shelf

Foods from the top shelf like chocolate, sweets and bars should not be offered as a substitute for other foods and should only be used as an occasional treat. Remember these are the foods that can cause tooth decay and so are best to eat at mealtimes and not in between meals.

Drinks

Always include a drink with lunch but remember to choose a tooth-friendly drink. Water and milk are the best choice. If choosing juices choose unsweetened fruit juice and try to limit at mealtimes. Sugar-free squashes can also be used with meals. Vary the drink by offering soup, yogurt drinks or homemade milk shakes (without added sugar).

Remember to look at those labels when buying drinks to make sure you are making a tooth-friendly choice.

Some primary schools provide free milk for all pupils. It may be useful to find out if this facility is available at your children's school.



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