

SPAR 

BETTER CHOICES

Eat well, Live better

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Nutrition for young children



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Children that are of pre-school and primary school going age require a balanced diet that provides a variety of nutrients.

- Children need nutrients that are important for brain development and function. These nutrients include essential fatty acids, vitamins such as vitamin E, folic acid, vitamin B12, vit-amin B6, and minerals iron and zinc.
- They also need nutrients to help develop and maintain muscles and bones, such as protein, calcium, magnesium, potassium and Vitamin D.

- They need nutrients that help improve their immune system such as zinc, iron, selenium and Vitamin C and A
- The table at the end of the leaflet shows the function and sources of each nutrient mentioned
- Portion sizes depend on the age and activity levels of each child, and are therefore not specified in this leaflet. If you are unsure of the correct portion sizes of foods for your child, or concerned about them being under- or overweight, it is best to consult with your doctor and/or dietitian.

START THEIR DAY THE RIGHT WAY

Children should always have something to eat in the morning before going to school. Eating sugary, refined cereals can affect children's ability to concentrate. A better breakfast choice will contain less refined starch, more fibre, and some protein to delay hunger. This should help them focus better during the morning until it's time for their first snack break.

Some ideas for breakfast:

- Whole grain bread, toasted, with poached egg/peanut butter/cheese
- Whole oats porridge made with milk
- A smoothie e.g. banana, plain yoghurt, a little oats + peanut butter
- Plain yoghurt with berries or chopped apple + sunflower seed

Continue on a healthy trend during the day by providing nutritious snacks and meals for their lunchboxes. It's best to package these in a cooler bag to keep food fresh and safe. Here are some ideas:

DAY	1ST BREAK SNACK	MEAL	SNACK*	BEVERAGE
Day one	Handful of un-salted peanuts or cashew nuts	Wholemeal roti/ wrap or whole grain bread filled with lentils/chicken or tuna + lettuce and tomato	Apple	Water - add lemon/apple or cucumber slices and ice in summer if desired
Day two	Small tub of yoghurt	Snack foods: meatballs / sausages + baby carrots + pop-corn/wholegrain crackers	Banana	Water - add lemon/apple or cucumber slices and ice in summer if desired
Day three	1 or 2 small cheese blocks	Wholewheat pasta salad with chopped cucumber, tomato, pumpkin seeds and protein (beef/ tofu/chickpeas)	Small bunch of grapes	Water - add lemon/apple or cucumber slices and ice in summer if desired
Day four	Peanuts and raisins	Wholegrain bread with peanut butter		
Cucumber slices or baby tomatoes	Easy peeler or pear	Water - add lemon/apple or cucumber slices and ice in summer if desired		

TIP! If children are very active or hungry and need an additional snack during the day, an extra fruit should suffice.

Hydration is important to help children focus during the day and to regulate body processes. Water is the best choice of drink for children. Sugary drinks should only be consumed occasionally, for example if they have a particularly active day playing sport. Sports drinks are not recommended unless children are extremely active. Energy drinks are not recommended for children.

Evening meals should be balanced with a portion of protein (lean meat/chicken/fish/beans or lentils), a small portion of unrefined carbohydrates if they are active (sweet potato/brown rice/ baby po-tatoes), and 2 different colour vegetables or salad ingredients.

A healthy beverage for evening meals could be water or a glass of cow's milk or non-dairy milk (almond/soy milk).

It's sometimes difficult to get children to eat a range of foods in order to achieve this balanced diet.

Practical ideas to encourage them to try new and healthy foods:

- When you're shopping for food, encourage children to help by choosing new vegetables, fruits and nuts they would like to try. Explain the benefits of healthy foods to your kids
- Serve their food in an attractive way on the plate by using cookie cutters to shape food, or creating a pattern or face with food
- Encourage children to participate in basic food preparation, such as beating eggs or washing vegetables and salad ingredients
- Leading by example is key with children. If you buy and prepare healthy foods, they will be more likely to eat healthier foods



- Try to eat meals as a family most nights, so that there is a positive association with eating a healthy balanced meal
- Don't give up encouraging children to try new food because their preferences can change quickly. Experiment with different flavours and unusual foods
- If they are averse to certain vegetables, try mixing them into meals such as finely grating carrot into minced meat, or blending them into a smooth soup

Dessert and treats should be left for weekends or special occasions. Teach children that treats are just treats, and not rewards. They are there to be enjoyed occasionally but should not replace healthy meals and snacks on most days.

TIP! Buy treats in small portion sizes so that it's easier to control how much you allow children to eat.

SOURCES OF NUTRIENTS INCLUDE:

NUTRIENT	HOW IT BENEFITS THE BODY	SOURCES
Vitamin A	Helps maintain normal vision and skin tissue	sweet potato, carrots, butternut, spinach, red pepper, cantaloupe melon, dried apricots, chicken or beef liver
Vitamin C	Helps the body form normal collagen and increases the absorption of iron from food. Helps reduce tiredness and fatigue	citrus fruits, pineapple, strawberries and kiwi fruit, tomatoes, peppers, broccoli, cabbage, marrows
Vitamin D	Helps the immune system function normally	egg yolk, sardines, salmon, mackerel, tuna
Vitamin E	Helps protect the body's cells from damage	sunflower seeds, unsalted nuts, peanut butter, olive oil and avocados
Folate (Vitamin B9)	Helps the immune system function normally and helps the body form normal red blood cells and amino acids	broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, peas, spinach, avocado, beetroot, split peas, lentils
Vitamin B6	Helps body cells produce energy and the nervous system to function normally	bananas, potatoes, chicken, beef, pork
Vitamin B12	Helps the body's nervous system function normally, helps form healthy red blood cells and reduce tiredness and fatigue	Lamb, beef, liver, tuna, salmon, cod, eggs

NUTRIENT	HOW IT BENEFITS THE BODY	SOURCES
Iron (Fe)	Helps normal brain development in children and helps body cells to produce energy	red meat, liver, spinach, dried peaches, raisins, lentils
Potassium (K+)	Helps muscles and the body's nervous system function normally	bananas, potatoes or sunflower seeds
Selenium (Se)	Helps maintain normal hair and nails. Helps protect body cells from damage.	mushrooms, liver and eggs
Magnesium (Mg)	Helps maintain normal bones, teeth and muscle function	Cashew, walnut, macadamia nuts, peanuts, peanut butter, humous, pumpkin seeds
Calcium (Ca)	Is needed for the maintenance of normal bones, teeth and muscle function	dairy products, almonds, soya milk, whole sardines and pilchards
Zinc (Zn)	Helps the immune system function normally. Helps maintain normal hair, nails, skin and vision	lean meat, lamb, cheese, pumpkin seeds
Essential fatty acids/oils	Omega 3 fatty acids helps the heart function normally and help maintain normal cholesterol levels in the blood	salmon, sardines, tuna , mackerel, linseeds and flax seeds
Protein	Is needed for the normal growth and development of bone in children. Helps the body grow and maintain muscle mass	Dairy products, meat, chicken, fish, legumes, beans, nuts, soya, eggs

For more information about how healthy eating can benefit your lifestyle or the lifestyle of your close ones, feel free to take on of our other leaflets!
You can inspire small and positive changes everyday!

SPAR recognises that all consumers' have different dietary needs.
Please consult a health professional if you have any specific health concerns or need specific dietary guidance.



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