

The standards for school lunches



Starchy foods

One or more portions of food from this group every day

Three or more different starchy foods each week

One or more wholegrain varieties of starchy food each week

Starchy food cooked in fat or oil no more than two days each week
(applies across the whole school day)

Bread - with no added fat or oil - must be available every day



Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein

A portion of food from this group every day

A portion of meat or poultry on three or more days each week

Oily fish once or more every three weeks

For vegetarians, a portion of non-dairy protein on three or more days each week

A meat or poultry product (manufactured or homemade, and meeting the legal requirements) no more than once each week in primary schools and twice each week in secondary schools
(applies across the whole school day)



Fruit and Vegetables

One or more portions of vegetables or salad as an accompaniment every day

One or more portions of fruit every day

A dessert containing at least 50% fruit two or more times each week

At least three different fruits and three different vegetables each week



Foods high in fat, sugar and salt

No more than two portions of food that have been deep-fried, batter-coated, or breadcrumb-coated, each week
(applies across the whole school day)

No more than two portions of food which include pastry each week
(applies across the whole school day)

No snacks, except nuts, seeds, vegetables and fruit with no added salt, sugar or fat
(applies across the whole school day)

Savoury crackers or breadsticks can be served at lunch with fruit or vegetables or dairy food

No confectionery, chocolate or chocolate-coated products
(applies across the whole school day)

Desserts, cakes and biscuits are allowed at lunchtime. They must not contain any confectionery

Salt must not be available to add to food after it has been cooked

Any condiments must be limited to sachets or portions of no more than 10 grams or one teaspoonful



Milk and dairy

A portion of food from this group every day

Lower fat milk must be available for drinking at least once a day during school hours



Healthier drinks

applies across the whole school day

Free, fresh drinking water at all times

The only drinks permitted are:

- Plain water (still or carbonated)
- Lower fat milk or lactose reduced milk
- Fruit or vegetable juice (max 150mls)
- Plain soya, rice or oat drinks enriched with calcium; plain fermented milk (e.g. yoghurt) drinks
- Unsweetened combinations of fruit or vegetable juice with plain water (still or carbonated)
- Combinations of fruit juice and lower fat milk or plain yoghurt, plain soya, rice or oat drinks enriched with calcium; cocoa and lower fat milk; flavoured lower fat milk
- Tea, coffee, hot chocolate

Combination drinks are limited to a portion size of 330mls. They may contain added vitamins or minerals, but no more than 5% added sugars or honey or 150mls fruit juice. Fruit juice combination drinks must be at least 45% fruit juice

Implementing the Standards

A child's healthy, balanced diet should consist of:

1. **Plenty of fruit and vegetables**
 2. **Plenty of unrefined starchy foods**
 3. **Some meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein**
 4. **Some milk and dairy foods**
- (and a small amount of food and drink high in fat, sugar and/or salt)**



Starchy foods

WHY IS THIS FOOD GROUP IMPORTANT?

Starchy food is an important source of energy and B vitamins. Flour is fortified with iron and calcium too.

Wholegrain varieties of bread and pasta are good sources of fibre, which is important for a healthy digestive system.

Starchy foods help children feel full, so they are less likely to snack on foods high in fat, saturated fat, sugar, or salt.

TOP TIPS

Use wholegrain varieties of starchy foods. Try using a 50:50 mix for pasta and rice.

Use at least half wholemeal or granary flour when making bread, puddings, cakes, biscuits, batters and sauces.

Use different types of bread, and look for products with higher fibre.

Do not add salt to water when cooking pasta, rice and other starchy foods.

Instead, add flavour to the main dish by using herbs, spices, garlic and vegetables.



Fruit and Vegetables

WHY IS THIS FOOD GROUP IMPORTANT?

Getting children to eat more fruit and vegetables (particularly vegetables) is vital for good health. Introducing children to a wide variety of fruit and vegetables establishes healthy eating habits for life, reducing the risk of heart disease, stroke and some cancers.

Fruit and vegetables are a good source of essential vitamins and minerals. They are also often a good source of fibre.

Fruit and vegetables add colour, flavour and variety to meals.

TOP TIPS

Make sure your 'meal deals' always contain at least one portion of vegetable and one portion of fruit.

Provide at least two different coloured vegetables and fruits each day.

Buy fruit and vegetables that are in season.

Choose canned products in water or 'natural juice', with no added salt or sugar.

Don't serve baked beans more than once a week, and choose low-sugar and low-salt varieties.

Pulses count as vegetables. (However, if you are serving pulses as a non-dairy protein for vegetarians, you will need a separate vegetable serving as well).

Steam vegetables or boil them in a minimal amount of water.

Make sure that fruit and vegetables are displayed prominently and attractively. Talk to the children to encourage them to try new vegetable and fruit dishes.

Using produce from the school garden is a great way to encourage children to try new vegetables and fruit.

Price a portion of fruit so that it's cheaper than a hot or cold dessert.

For the benefit of picky eaters, smuggle lots of vegetables into composite dishes such as Bolognese or chilli con carne.



Milk and dairy

WHY IS THIS FOOD GROUP IMPORTANT?

Dairy foods are a rich source of energy, protein, calcium, vitamin A and riboflavin.

TOP TIPS

Hard cheeses such as cheddar tend to be higher in saturated fat than softer cheese. When using hard cheeses, choose stronger-tasting varieties and use smaller amounts.

Offer frozen yoghurt as an alternative to ice cream.

Buy low-sugar varieties of milkshakes and yoghurt drinks. Better still, make them yourself using fruit to sweeten them.

The food-based standards specify which types of food should be served at school, and how often. Procuring foods in line with **Government Buying Standards** (see <http://sd.defra.gov.uk/advice/public/buying>) will help reduce salt, saturated fat and sugar, and increase fruit, vegetable and fibre content.



Meat, fish, eggs, beans

and other non-dairy sources of protein

WHY IS THIS FOOD GROUP IMPORTANT?

Foods from this group provide protein and essential minerals, including iron and zinc.

Oily fish provides omega-3 fatty acids (which are beneficial to health) and vitamins A and D.

TOP TIPS

Be aware that canned tuna is not a good source of omega-3 fatty acids.

Ensure vegetarian meals are as varied as the rest of the menu by using pulses twice a week, soya, tofu, or Quorn™ once or twice each week, and eggs and cheese once or twice each week.

Encourage all children to have a meat-free day each week, using alternatives such as pulses, soya mince, tofu and Quorn™.

Go to the Marine Stewardship Council (www.msc.org) for advice on buying responsibly sourced fish.



Foods high in fat, sugar and salt

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO LIMIT PROVISION OF FOOD FROM THIS GROUP?

Foods from this group are often high in energy (calories) but provide few other nutrients.

Reducing saturated fat intake can help reduce the risk of heart disease. Eating unsaturated fats instead, which are found in foods such as oily fish, nuts and seeds, and sunflower and olive oils, can help lower blood cholesterol.

Too much salt can encourage a taste for salty foods, potentially leading to high blood pressure in later life.

High sugar intake provides unnecessary calories and can lead to weight gain and tooth decay.

TOP TIPS

Saturated fat is linked to an increased risk of heart disease, so choose mono- and poly-unsaturated fats – such as rapeseed, soya, sunflower and olive oils – wherever possible for cooking or salad dressings.

Avoid products that list partially hydrogenated fat or oil on the label.

Use higher fibre ingredients, such as wholemeal flour, alongside or instead of white flour.

Reduce the amount of sugar used in dishes. Use fresh or dried fruit to sweeten dishes.

Ask suppliers for nutritional information, and read food labels to check the amount of fat, saturated fat, salt and sugars in their products.

Instead of salt, use herbs, spices, garlic, vegetables and fruits to add flavour to dishes.

Do not use flavour enhancers such as MSG or E621. These can be very high in sodium.

Choose biscuits, cakes and pastries that are lower in fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt. Where possible, choose products that meet the Responsibility Deal targets. <https://responsibilitydeal.dh.gov.uk>

If buying ready meals, choose those with less than 6g saturated fat per portion.



Healthier drinks

WHY ARE HEALTHY DRINKS IMPORTANT?

Water should be the default drink for every child. The more it is offered, the more readily they will accept it. Sugary or sweetened drinks often have no nutritional value, contribute to weight gain, and can cause tooth decay.

TOP TIPS

Provide drinks that are unsweetened, unfortified and additive-free.

Avoid drinks containing preservatives, flavourings, colourings and sweeteners.