Good nutrition in the early years

Early Years 2017 Conference
Children’s Health, Transition to Transformation
7 February 2017, Royal Society of Medicine

Dr Patricia Mucavele, Head of Nutrition,
Children’s Food Trust
Today’s presentation

- What are children eating?
- Current nutritional status of one to five year olds
- Importance of investing in nutrition in early childhood
- Helping children eat better, in childcare
- Eat Better, Start Better programme
- Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England
  - Rationale and evidence
  - Defining a healthy, balanced and nutritious diet
  - Encouraging children to eat well
  - Overview of practical resources
- Childhood Obesity Plan supporting early years settings
Children’s Food Trust

- On a mission to get every child eating well, wherever they are eating
- Spreading the skills, knowledge and confidence to cook from scratch
- Helping everyone who provides food for children to do a great job
- Encouraging industry to help children and their families make better food choices

We all have a duty of care
National diet and nutrition survey suggests that the diets of young children aged one to five years are:

- too high in sugar, saturated fat and salt
- too low fruit and vegetables
- too little oily fish
- low intakes of fibre
- low intakes of some vitamins and minerals (e.g. vitamin A and iron).

Source: National Diet and Nutrition Survey (2016)
Current health status of one to five-year-olds

- more than a fifth of children are either overweight or obese by the time they join reception class
- type II diabetes starting to appear
- poor dental health in many young children
- more than one in four young children are at risk of iron deficiency linked to slower intellectual development and poor behaviour in the longer term.

RCPCH (2017)
Why invest in nutrition?

Because when..

Girls & women are well-nourished and have healthy newborn babies

Children receive proper nutrition and develop strong bodies & minds

The world is a safer, more resilient & stronger place

Communities & nations are productive & stable

Young adults are better able to obtain work & earn more

Families & communities emerge out of poverty

Adolescents learn better & achieve higher grades in school

**Source:** WHO (2013) Scaling up nutrition
Importance of early intervention

The Marmot Review (2010)

Field (2010)

Allen (2011)

(2015)

Key message: Start early
Establishing healthy eating habits – impact on growth and behaviour

Diet and healthy weight
• EarlyBird Diabetes Study
• Cohort of 307 healthy children
• Early weight gain and metabolic health (e.g. blood pressure)
• Most excess weight gain before puberty is gained before 5 years of age
• Weight at 5 years closely predicts weight at 9 years
• Important to ensure healthy weight during the early years – key to targeting public health interventions

Source: Gardner (2009)

Diet and academic achievement
• Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) cohort
• Association between dietary patterns at age 3, 4, 7 years and academic achievement at Key Stage 2
• Dietary patterns divided into three groups: ‘junk food’, ‘health conscious’ and ‘traditional’
• Junk food’ diet at age 3 years associated with lower school attainment at Key Stage 2, independent of later diet

Source: Feinstein (2008)
Importance of children’s early years

- **Children’s early years** influence their health, development, learning, attainment and economic participation.

- **Eating habits** during children’s early years, influence growth, development and academic achievement in later life.

- **Giving every child the best start in life** is crucial to reducing health inequalities for life.

**Key message**

The early years of a child’s life are critically important:
- in their own right
- as a foundation of success at school and for all adult life.
Priorities for improving nutrition

Range of interventions at different stages of the life

Source: Francesco Branca et al. BMJ 2015

Early years settings - vital route to encourage young children and their families to eat well
Helping children eat better in childcare
Our recommendations:

- **Guidance:** encourage childcare providers to use evidence-based, age appropriate nutrition guidance

- **Training:** encourage LAs to increase access to accredited training

- **Funding:** ensure nurseries, pre-schools, children’s centres and childminders delivering free childcare schemes have the resources they need to provide good food.

Children’s Food Trust (2015)
• Provide clear guidance and support to caregivers to avoid specific categories of foods (e.g. sugar-sweetened milks and fruit juices or energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods) for the prevention of excess weight gain.

• Provide clear guidance and support to caregivers to encourage the consumption of a wide variety of healthy foods.

• Provide guidance to caregivers on appropriate nutrition, diet and portion size for this age group.

• Ensure only healthy foods, beverages and snacks are served in formal child care settings or institutions.

• Ensure food education and understanding are incorporated into the curriculum in formal childcare settings or institutions.
Rationale and evidence for the Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England
Early Years Foundation Stage - welfare requirements

Food and drink

3.47. Where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, they must be healthy, balanced and nutritious.

Before a child is admitted to the setting the provider must also obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies that the child has, and any special health requirements.

Fresh drinking water must be available and accessible at all times.

Providers must record and act on information from parents and carers about a child's dietary needs.
3.48. There must be an area which is **adequately equipped** to provide healthy meals, snacks and drinks for children as necessary.

There must be **suitable facilities** for the hygienic preparation of food for children, if necessary including suitable sterilisation equipment for babies’ food.

Providers must be **confident** that those responsible for preparing and handling food are **competent** to do so.

In group provision, all staff involved in preparing and handling food must receive **training in food hygiene**.
Advisory Panel recommendations

- **Maintain** Early Years Foundation Stage welfare requirements for food and drink

- **Develop** clear, practical guidance and support tools

- **Deliver** a comprehensive training package

- **Provide** a consistent approach to quality improvement/benchmarking for parents

- **Conduct** a survey of food provision and consumption in early years settings.

Children’s Food Trust (2010)
Meeting the welfare requirement for food and drink

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) section 3.47 states ‘Where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, they must be healthy, balanced and nutritious’. (2014)

National guidance Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England (2012)
Eat Better, Start Better programme
to support young children and their families to cook and eat well

Working in partnership to implement the voluntary food and drink guidelines to improve health outcomes for children in the early years
Eat Better, Start Better

**National guidance** - Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England

**Accredited training** to help childcare providers use the guidelines

**Evaluation tools** to monitor the outcome and impact of training

- practitioners knowledge and confidence
- approach to and provision of food
- family eating habits

**Early years settings** - vital route to encourage young children and their families to eat well
What is a healthy, balanced, nutritious diet for children aged one to five years?
Practical guide

Seven sections

01 Eat better, start better: why healthy eating matters for young children
02 Planning menus
03 The food and drink guidelines
04 At a glance – the food and drink guidelines for each meal and snack
05 How to encourage children to eat well
06 Practical tools and resources
07 Where to find additional information
A healthy, balanced, nutritious diet is based on the four food groups below:

1. Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates
2. Fruit and vegetables
3. Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins
4. Dairy and alternatives

Key message:

Eating a wide variety of foods from these groups will provide children with the good balance of nutrients they need
Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England

• How often, how much and which types of food to provide

• Listed by food group:
  – Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates
  – Fruit and vegetables
  – Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins
  – Dairy and alternatives

• Additional guidelines for:
  – desserts, puddings and cakes
  – drinks
  – fat, salt and sugar
  – food additives, ready meals and fortified foods.

➢ Download guidelines and use to plan ‘healthy, balanced and nutritious’ meals and snacks
For each food group, there is information to explain:

- **the types of food and drink** included in the food group
- **why the food group is important**
- Food safety information
- **guidelines** for planning menus
- typical **portion size** information.
**Interpreting the guidelines**

**Key:**

- **Food and drink guidelines** – use these to plan your meals and snacks
- **Good practice** – consider these when planning your meals and snacks
- **Food safety** – these list food safety issues for young children

**Definitions:**

- **Limit:** where the guidelines advise that food or drinks should be limited, these should be provided **no more than once a week**. This will help to decrease the amount of salt, sugar and saturated fat in children’s diets and increase the variety of food and drinks they are offered.
- **Avoid:** where the guidelines advise that food or drinks should be avoided, these should **not be provided** as part of any meals or snacks.
‘At a glance’ information by meal

- Lists the food and drink guidelines by meal occasion
  - Breakfast
  - Snacks
  - Lunch
  - Tea
- Useful if catering for one meal or snack
- Includes examples of meals and snacks meeting the food and drink guidelines
How does a healthy, balanced diet for children aged one to five years differ from that needed by older children and adults?
The **Eatwell Guide** illustrates healthy eating advice for children aged five and over, and for adults.

**Source:** Public Health England 2016  
Key points to remember

✓ It is important to ensure children **eat a variety of foods** from the four food groups.

✓ Children under five years old need a **relatively higher fat, lower fibre diet** compared to older children and adults.

✓ Children **under two years old** should have **whole (full-fat) milk and dairy foods**. Children aged between **two and five years** old who are **growing well** can have **semi-skimmed milk**.

✓ **Provide** food containing **unsaturated fat** from plant and fish sources, and **limit** consumption of **saturated fat**.

✓ **Limit consumption** of food and drinks high in **added sugar** – these provide calories but few nutrients and can lead to tooth decay.

✓ **Limit consumption of salt** - it can lead to serious health conditions in later life such as stroke, heart disease and kidney problems.
Encouraging children to eat well
How to encourage children to eat well

- Developing a **food policy** and putting it into practice
- **Communicating** with children and their families
- The **eating environment** and **social aspects** of meal times
- **Celebrations** and special occasions
- Providing **food for all**
- Encouraging **fussy eaters** to eat well
- **Food** brought from **home**
- Learning about and **through food**
- Cooking with children
- **Food safety** and **hygiene**
- **Sustainability**
- Protecting children’s **health**
Early Years Code of Practice for Food and Drink

Demonstrate **approach** to food and nutrition meets national guidelines and best practice

Seven principles

- Food policy
- Consultation
- Varied, seasonal, sustainable menus
- Meals, snacks and drink meet the new national guidelines
- Catering for dietary requirements
- Positive and welcoming eating environment
- Adequate staff training

> Encourage settings to sign up
Practical resources to help early years settings provide ‘healthy, balanced and nutritious’ meals and snacks
Example menus and recipes

➢ Download the menus and recipes for ideas
Example meals and snacks

**Breakfast**
- Rice crispies (25g) with whole milk (100ml) and dried apricots (25g) and half a banana (40g) with a cup of water (100ml).

**Mid-morning snack**
- Sugar snap peas (40g) and houmous (40g) with a cup of water (100ml).

**Lunch**
- Main course: Chickpea and vegetable curry (120g) with brown rice (90g).
- Drink: Glass of water (100ml).

**Mid-afternoon snack**
- Melon (40g) and half a toasted muffin (30g) with spread (4g) and a cup of water (100ml).

**Tea**
- Dessert: Raspberry purée (40g) and fromage frais (60g).
- Drink: Glass of water (100ml).
### Portion sizes

#### Beef Lasagne

**Ingredients**
- Beef, mince (200g)
- Lasagne sheets (300g)
- Tomato sauce (400g)
- Breadcrumbs (50g)
- Mozzarella cheese (100g)
- Salt, pepper, nutmeg

**Method**
1. Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F).
2. Grease a 20cm square baking dish.
3. Place a layer of lasagne sheets in the dish.
4. Spread a layer of beef, tomato sauce, and cheese.
5. Repeat layers until all ingredients are used.
6. Bake for 30-40 minutes or until golden.

**Preparation time:** 30 minutes
**Cooking time:** 30 minutes

#### Starchy foods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good choices of foods to serve</th>
<th>Portion sizes in practice, images not to scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bread:</strong> includes white, brown, granary, wholemeal, pitta, multigrain breads, white bread, wholewheat bread, oatmeal bread, brown bread, plain baked rolls, rolls, plain bread, rolls, plain rolls. Red or white bread, wraps, tortilla breadsticks, crackers and rice cakes.</td>
<td>1 roll small piece (15g) 1 slice large piece (25-30g) 1 small roll or pitta bread or 1 mini sandwich (25-50g) 2-3 small breadsticks (10-15g) 1-2 crackers (8-18g) 1-2 oatcakes (10-20g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potatoes or sweet potatoes:</strong> includes baked, boiled, mashed, jacket and baked.</td>
<td>1 small baked or boiled potatoes (150-180g) 2-3 tablespoons mashed potatoes (85-105g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other starchy root vegetables:</strong> includes roasted, boiled or baked, parsnips, swede, pumpkin and beetroot.</td>
<td>1 small baked root vegetable (85-105g) 2-3 tablespoons mashed vegetables (90-105g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pasta and noodles:</strong> includes boiled white and wholemeal spaghetti, macaroni and pasta shapes.</td>
<td>3-4 tablespoons pasta or noodles (55g-185g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rice:</strong> includes boiled white and brown rice.</td>
<td>2-3 tablespoons rice (55g-100g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other grains:</strong> includes couscous, bulgur wheat, millet (groats) and porridge.</td>
<td>2-3 tablespoons grains (60-100g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low or medium sugar breakfast cereals:</strong> includes porridge, cornflakes, wheat biscuits and rice shapes.</td>
<td>3-5 tablespoons breakfast cereal (20-30g) 1-1½ tablespoons biscuits (20g-30g) 15-20g bowl porridge made with milk (100-110g)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Practical guide

- Portion sizes are typical servings in portion sizes for children aged one to five years, and are not suitable for children under one year old.

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**Menu and recipe documents**
Key points to remember:

• **Not necessary to weigh portions of food**: the portion sizes in the guide are listed as weights and household measures – we would not encourage settings to weigh portions of food

• **Visual guide**: the portion size information in the guide can be used as a visual guide to how much is a typical portion for children aged one to five years – some will eat less than this and some children will eat more

• **Settings can manage portion sizes** by:
  – offering initial portions to children that are smaller than the typical portion sizes in the guide, and then offering seconds of different foods to children when they would like more
  – encouraging children to serve themselves at lunchtime – great for development of motor skills and counting.
## Choosing healthier ingredients

### Understanding food labels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low a healthier choice</th>
<th>Medium OK most of the time</th>
<th>High just occasionally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fat</td>
<td>3g or less</td>
<td>Between 3g-17.5g</td>
<td>More than 17.5g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturates (saturated fat)</td>
<td>1.5g or less</td>
<td>Between 1.5g-5g</td>
<td>More than 5g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugars</td>
<td>5g or less</td>
<td>Between 5g-22.5g</td>
<td>More than 22.5g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>0.3g or less</td>
<td>Between 0.3-1.5g</td>
<td>More than 1.5g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which baked beans is lower in salt and sugar?

Using food labels to identify baked beans lower in salt and sugar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baked beans - brand 1</th>
<th>Baked beans - brand 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nutritional information</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nutritional information</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Typical values</strong></td>
<td><strong>Per 100g</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>355kJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat</td>
<td>0.6g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which saturates</td>
<td>0.1g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrate</td>
<td>15.3g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which sugars</td>
<td>5.9g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fibre</td>
<td>3.7g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
<td>5.2g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>1.3g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reading food labels: tips

• **Think about portion size:** the nutrient content of a product depends on the amount of it we eat. When similar products have different serving sizes it makes it difficult for us to interpret which is the healthier choice.

• **Use nutrition values per 100g to compare products:** It is easier to compare the nutrient content of different products and select healthier versions by looking at the amount of fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt per 100g of each product.

• **Front of pack labelling:** manufacturers are encouraged to use the Department of Health’s [front of pack colour coding](#) which categorises products as **high** (red), **medium** (amber) or **low** (green) in fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt based on the amount per 100g of a product.
Additional factsheets

Produced to support settings to adopt and demonstrate a whole setting approach to healthy eating

Expects how to meet the 2014 allergen labelling requirements

Outlines the different types of special diets and how to manage them

Download factsheets from our website
What’s next
30 hours free childcare

Extension of free childcare = more children eating more meals there

Practical steps and support

- Promoting and supporting healthy eating
- Adopting a ‘whole setting approach’
- Menu planning and food provision
- Meeting allergen labelling requirements
- Catering for children with special dietary requirements
- Packed lunches

Unprecedented opportunity to improve children’s eating habits?
Packed lunches

Healthy packed lunches for early years

A practical guide for parents and carers

Healthy packed lunches are vital for your child’s energy and development. By planning and preparing meals in advance, you can help encourage healthy eating and reduce the amount of processed foods your child consumes.

A balanced, nutritious packed lunch is essential. The below provides you with some ideas of what makes a healthy packed lunch.

Healthy, balanced and nutritious packed lunch ideas

- A portion of plenty of fruit
- A portion of salad
- A portion of meat, fish or tofu
- A portion of nuts, seeds, beans or lentils
- A portion of whole grains
- A portion of dairy

Sample packed lunch menu

**Monday**
- Chicken and pasta salad with red pepper
- Salad
- Water

**Tuesday**
- Children’s packed lunch with salad
- Bread
- Water

**Wednesday**
- Sandwiches with cheese and cucumber
- Salad
- Water

**Thursday**
- Soup and sandwich
- Apple
- Water

**Friday**
- Egg salad sandwich
- Tomato
- Water

For more ideas on how to make healthy packed lunches, please visit our website: www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk

Practical tips for healthy, safe and tasty packed lunches

- Include your child in choosing and preparing their packed lunch.
- Ensure food is refrigerated and not left out for too long.
- Make sure your child’s packed lunch includes a variety of foods.
- Pay attention to the balance of nutrients in their lunch.
- Make sure your child’s packed lunch is not too spicy or too sweet.

Download packed lunch guidance from our website
Public Health England - commissioned the Children’s Food Trust to develop revised menus for early years settings in England, to reflect recent changes to government dietary recommendations.
Why develop new early years menus?

Menus need updating to reflect current government dietary recommendations:

- Lower energy intakes
- Reductions in the amount of ‘free sugars’* (added sugars)
- Increases in the amount of dietary fibre

**Outcome:** to help promote appropriate amounts and types of food for young children, thereby helping to support key national priorities including reducing childhood obesity, addressing health inequalities, and ensuring the best start in life for all children.

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*Free sugars* includes all monosaccharides and disaccharides added to foods by the manufacturer, cook or consumer, plus sugars naturally present in honey, syrups and unsweetened fruit juices. Under this definition lactose (milk sugar) when naturally present in milk and milk products and sugars contained within the cellular structure of foods (particularly fruits and vegetables) are excluded.
Thank you – any questions?

Contact us for more information:

patricia.mucavele@childrensfoodtrust.org.uk
http://twitter.com/ChildFoodTrust
http://www.facebook.com/childrensfoodtrust
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qI9gkDejP5w