Tiny Tums!

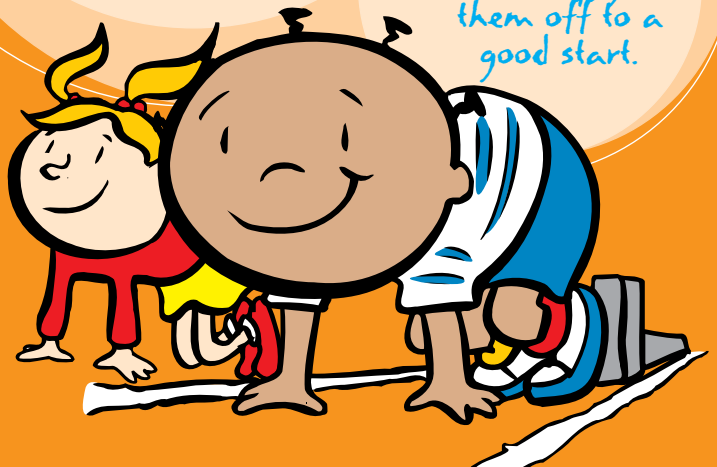
A short guide to healthy eating for one-to-fives

Off to a good start

What your little one eats plays an important part in keeping him or her happy, healthy and growing and developing properly. Between the ages of one and five children grow very quickly and become more and more active. By now they'll be joining in with family meals and it's an important time for them to learn about food.

This can include energetic play on a climbing frame and chasing games, lighter activity such as standing up, moving around, rolling and playing and also everyday activities like walking to school and tidying toys.

This little guide will help get them off to a good start.



When it comes to healthy eating it's important to remember that children aren't just little adults.

The one-to-fives need to get lots of nutrients and energy from their food because they are growing and developing so quickly. But small children only have tiny tums and can't usually cope with big meals. This means that the foods they eat have to provide energy and nutrients in a compact form.

For tiny tots, especially those under two, the high-fibre foods recommended for adults don't fit the bill for all toddlers – some may get diarrhoea with too much fibre. Little ones who eat only high fibre can become full before they've had all the energy and nutrients they need. Once your child is two, providing they are eating and growing well, you can gradually introduce lower-fat foods.

Whole milk is best for the one-to-fives because it contains more vitamin A than other milks. From 2 years of age they can have semi-skimmed milk but should not have skimmed or 1% milk (see pages 5-6). Give them a mixture of white and wholemeal bread rather than just high-fibre varieties.

The one-to-fives need small nutritious meals with nourishing snacks in between.

Go for variety

The best way to make sure your child gets all the nutrients and energy they need is to give them a wide variety of foods from the four main food groups.

Food group	Examples	Quantity	Key nutrients	Tips
Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods	Bread, breakfast cereals, potatoes, pasta, rice, noodles, chapattis and yams	At least one serving with each meal and as some snacks	Carbohydrate - energy B vitamins Fibre	Small portions of these foods make great snacks Give a mixture of white, brown and wholegrain varieties
Fruit and vegetables	All fresh, frozen and tinned fruit (in natural juice) and vegetables (in unsalted water), pure fruit juice (diluted) and dried fruit	Aim towards 5 'child-sized' portions a day One portion is about the amount they can fit in the palm of their hand	Vitamins - especially vitamin C Dark green vegetables provide some iron Fibre	Fruit juices (diluted) and dried fruit should be kept to mealtimes only as they have higher concentrations of sugar that can contribute to the development of tooth decay Vegetables can be easily added to soups and stews. Or some children prefer to eat their vegetables raw
Milk, hard cheese and yogurt	Milk, hard cheese, yogurt	About 3, 120ml servings of milk and dairy a day either as a drink, in milk-based dishes or as hard cheese, yogurt or fromage frais	Calcium - strong bones and teeth Protein - growth and development Phosphorus - energy release Iodine - normal growth in children	Milk can be used in custard, milk puddings, sauces and soups Try yogurts as a pudding or snack
Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein	Meat, poultry (e.g. chicken, turkey), fish (e.g. tuna, fish fingers), eggs, nuts*, pulses (e.g. peas, baked beans, chickpeas, lentils) and soya products such as tofu	Try to provide 2 servings each day for young children eating meat and fish or 2 or 3 servings of alternative protein sources each day for vegetarian young children	Protein - growth and development Iron (especially red meat and liver**) Other important vitamins and minerals including zinc and vitamin B_6	Even small amounts of meat are useful to help keep iron levels topped up Lean meat, tinned salmon, tuna, peanut butter*, houmous and eggs all make ideal sandwich fillings

***Nuts**

- **Safety:** children under five should not be given whole nuts because of the risk of inhaling and choking.
- **Peanut allergy:** as long as there is no history of food or other allergies in your family, you can give your toddler peanuts, as long as they are crushed or ground into peanut butter. Otherwise if your child already has a known allergy or there is a history of allergy in your child's immediate family (either parent or sibling) you should speak to your healthcare professional before you give peanuts or foods containing peanuts for the first time.

****Liver**

- If you give liver or liver products to your child, they should be given no more than once a week.

Milky matters

Milk is an important food for young children. It is packed full of nutrients, providing:

- Calcium for strong bones and teeth
- Protein for growth and development
- Energy, vitamins B2, B5 and B12
- The minerals iodine, phosphorus and potassium

Try to offer about 3 servings of milk and dairy a day either as a drink, in milk-based dishes or as hard cheese, yogurt or fromage frais.

Milk can be introduced into the diet on cereal, in soups and in mashed potatoes.

Between the ages of one and two, it's recommended that you give your toddler whole milk to drink rather than skimmed, 1% or semi-skimmed milk. Whole milk will provide more fat soluble vitamins.

From two years onwards, you can start to introduce semi-skimmed milk if your child is eating a good variety of foods and growing well. Otherwise, stick to whole milk. Skimmed and 1% milk are not suitable for children under five.

If your child doesn't like to drink milk, try to make sure you offer a selection of other dairy foods such as cheese and yogurt. You can also incorporate milk into dishes such as custard, milk puddings, fresh fruit milkshakes, sauces and soups.

Milk allergy

Milk allergy is not as common as people think – it affects about 1 in 50 infants, but is much less common in older children (most children outgrow their allergy).

If you think your child is allergic to milk, you should consult your GP. If a milk allergy is diagnosed, the doctor will refer you to a Registered Dietitian for specialist advice. Neither goat's nor sheep's milks are a suitable replacement for cow's milk; your child's body may react in the same way as it does to cow's milk.

Soya products should only be used if advised by a GP or dietitian, as children who are allergic to cows' milk may also be allergic to these.

Vitamins and iron

Vitamin supplements

The Department of Health recommends that all children aged one to five should be given a daily vitamin supplement containing vitamins A, C and D. Vitamin supplements are available under the Healthy Start Scheme. Ask your Health Visitor for details.

Iron

It's important to give young children some iron-containing food every day. Iron is used to make red blood cells and is essential for healthy growth. Too little iron can lead to anaemia, which can affect your child's development.

Meat, especially red meat, and oily fish contribute iron to the diet.

The iron in other foods such as pulses and bread is not absorbed by the body as well as it is from meat. Vitamin C rich foods (e.g. citrus fruit, peppers and some types of leafy green vegetables) can help increase absorption so it's a good idea to include some of these in the same meal. For example, slices of orange, strawberries or kiwi fruit at breakfast time will help make the most of the iron in cereal or toast. This is particularly important for vegetarian children.

Tea and coffee may reduce iron absorption so are not suitable for young children.

Where can I get iron?

Red meat and meat products (e.g. beef, lamb, pork)

Liver*

Chicken and turkey (especially the dark meat)

Other foods providing iron:

Breakfast cereals with added iron

Bread

Pulses (e.g. baked beans and lentils)

Dried fruit like apricots and raisins

Dark green leafy vegetables.

Giving these foods along with a source of vitamin C will help tiny tots make the best use of iron.

*It is recommended that liver or liver products are given to children no more than once a week.

Veggie kids

A vegetarian diet can be a healthy one for young children but it takes careful planning to make sure that the nutrients usually found in meat are provided from other foods.

As red meat is a good source of iron, it's particularly important to include plenty of alternatives such as pulses, bread and fortified breakfast cereals (along with vitamin C-rich foods to help absorption - see page 7 for examples). In a typical young child's diet, meat also provides important amounts of other minerals, vitamins and protein.

*see page 3 for advice on nuts.

A veggie diet can be quite bulky and filling for a small child, so low-fibre, nourishing choices such as eggs, cheese and milk are important to help towards your child's nutrient intake.

If your child is vegan, ask your GP to refer you to a Registered Dietitian for specialist advice.

Nourishing nibbles

Between-meal snacks provide an important nutrient and energy top-up for small children. Nourishing nibbles include:

- Small sandwiches (filled with grated cheese, egg, tuna or lean meat)
- Fingers of toast with cheese spread or houmous
- Plain yogurt or fromage frais with added fruit
- Sliced or chopped fruit (e.g. apples, pears, bananas and grapes)
- Raw vegetables, sliced or cut into sticks (e.g. carrots, tomato and cucumber)
- Toasted muffin or bagel
- Cubes of cheese
- Rice cakes, bread sticks or oat cakes
- Small bowl of breakfast cereal and milk
- Scones, crumpets or pancakes

Keep snacks tooth-friendly by keeping them sugar-free.

Try not to give too many snacks as this may not leave enough room for main meals.

Drinks

Milk and **water** are good choices for young children. Milk is packed with important nutrients such as protein, calcium, potassium and a number of the B vitamins.

New guidelines recommend reducing sugar intake by decreasing the frequency of sugar-sweetened beverages and fruit juices in the diet. If you choose to give your child **fruit juice it should always be well diluted** and given in a cup not a bottle.

Squashes and other **soft drinks** are not recommended. Not only are they bad news for teeth (even the 'diet' versions), their nutrient content is very low too. Toddlers who drink them frequently can have less room to eat well at mealtimes. Even unsweetened fruit juice contains naturally occurring sugars which are harmful to your child's teeth. If your child must have fruit juice try not to make this a habit and make sure it is very well diluted and taken at mealtimes only. **Fizzy drinks should be avoided**.

It's also best not to give young children tea or coffee, as this may interfere with iron absorption.

By the age of one, your child should be using a cup or beaker for their drinks. Prolonged bottle drinking is not recommended.

Talking teeth

Help your nipper look after their nashers.

1. Only give sugary foods, dried fruit and diluted unsweetened fruit juice at mealtimes. This makes them less likely to cause tooth decay and erosion (see pages 13 & 14 for more advice on sweet drinks).

Milk and water are good choices for teeth between meals. It is best to give these to drink at mealtimes too.

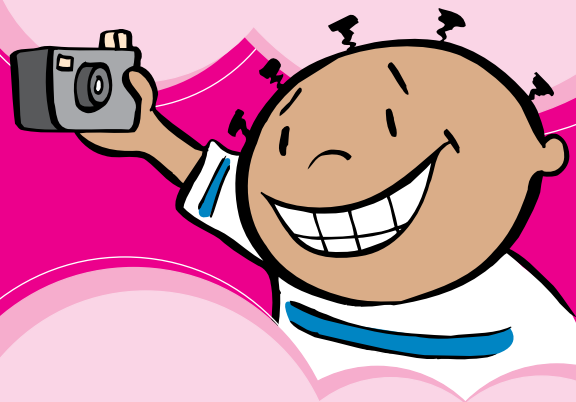
2. It's OK to give children sweets very occasionally, but don't offer them regularly or as a reward. If you do let your child have sweets, only give small amounts with meals and not before bed. It's less harmful for their teeth if they eat the sweets all at once at the end of a meal.

3. Help your child to brush their teeth thoroughly twice a day - a smear of family toothpaste containing at least 1,000ppm (parts per million) fluoride is all that's needed until three years, a pea-sized blob containing 1,350-1,500ppm fluoride is all that's needed for children aged three to six years. You'll need to help them to brush until they are at least seven years olds.

4. Visit the dentist regularly for check-ups and advice.

Although milk teeth will eventually be replaced, they still need looking after as:

- They help to guide the permanent teeth into position and without them the next set may be crooked
- They are important for the early development of speech - it's very tricky to pronounce S, TH and F without teeth!
- They are needed for proper chewing
- A healthy smile will boost a child's confidence



Say cheese

Eating a small piece of hard cheese will provide calcium. Calcium is needed for strong teeth.

Menu ideas

This menu is intended as a guide for food choice, with ideas for foods to try. A five-year-old will eat considerably more than a one-year-old and so the menu does not give portion sizes.

Give your child water throughout the day as required.

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Breakfast	Porridge with milk Satsuma Water	Wheat bisk with milk and dried chopped apricots Water	Scrambled egg with tomatoes and a toasted buttered muffin Milk
Mid-morning	Banana Water	Sliced pear Milk	Red pepper sticks Water
Lunch	Lentil soup with a wholemeal roll Peach Water	Mushroom omelette with cheese Baby boiled potatoes Cucumber sticks Rice Pudding Water	Baked potato with baked beans (reduced sugar) Green salad Apple slices Fromage frais Water
Mid-afternoon snack	Ricecakes Mini mozzarella balls and cherry tomatoes (quartered) Water	Crackers with houmous Carrot sticks Water	Oatcake with cottage cheese Grapes Water
Tea/dinner	Minced beef and vegetables with mashed potato (mashed with milk) Plain whole milk yohurt with strawberries Water	Tuna and sweetcorn pasta salad Brocoli Fresh fruit salad Water	Chicken curry with rice and a chickpea and spinach dahl Stewed plum with homemade custard Water
Evening drink	Water	Water	Water

Avoid adding salt to your little one's food. Flavour foods with herbs and spices instead of salt when cooking.

Magic mealtimes

- Use brightly coloured, child-sized cups, plates and cutlery.
- Present the food in an attractive, toddler-friendly way - make it interesting and colourful.
- Try to eat together - sit at the table with your child and have something yourself.
- Turn off distractions such as the TV, DVD or computer game and have a chat during the meal.
- Let your child help with simple food preparation or laying the table - they'll love feeling involved.
- Try not to get too wound up if your child makes a mess. It's all part of learning about food!
- Encourage new foods and don't worry if they are rejected, just try again another day.

Safe tums

Avoid

- Raw fish
- Raw or partly cooked eggs
- Shark, marlin and swordfish
- Rice drinks

Fussy eaters

It's very common for young children to go through phases of being fussy about what they eat - sometimes eating very little, refusing to eat certain foods at all (even ones they previously liked) or wanting to eat the same thing day after day.

As stressful as this can be, it's rarely harmful. In fact, fussy eating is a normal part of children growing up and asserting their independence.

How to cope

- Eat together. The best way for your child to learn to eat and enjoy new foods is to copy you.
- Try to keep calm! It's important not to turn mealtimes into a battleground.
- If, after gentle encouragement, your child refuses to eat something, just remove the food without making a fuss.
- Never force your child to clear their plate but praise them when they do eat up or try something new.
- Foods that are rejected on one occasion may well be accepted the next, so keep offering a range of foods. Sometimes you may need to offer a food 10 to 15 times before your child will like it.
- Changing the form a food is given in can also make it more appealing. For example, a child might refuse cooked carrots but like raw ones.
- Serve any new foods alongside old favourites.
- Keep portions small at first, you can always offer seconds.
- Don't bribe them into eating something they don't want - for example, promising a pudding if they eat their greens.

Remember, these phases do pass! But if you are worried about your child's eating habits, talk to your GP or Health Visitor.

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For details on additional information sources please contact The Dairy Council

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