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# Help my child won't eat... Nutritional Advice For Fussy Eaters

Practical tips for parents and carers



Follow on from [Fussy eating what can I do?](#)

Produced by the Nutrition and Clinical Dietetic Department©

## Help! My child won't eat

Children go through phases of not eating certain foods. They might even refuse to eat anything for a day or two. This is normal in young children as they become wary of new foods and tastes. You may be worried but your child will not come to any harm if they do not eat very much for a few days.

### At mealtimes

#### Do

- Eat with your child and show them you enjoy different foods.
- Offer foods that have been refused before. It can take a few attempts for a child to try a new food.
- Offer a new food with a food your child already likes.

#### Don't

- Assume your child will dislike any foods.
- Offer alternatives if they refuse the food.
- Make separate or "special" meals.
- Show frustration when food is refused.



## A Healthy Balanced Diet

Small children need 3 meals and 2-3 snacks at regular times everyday. Each meal should contain some fruit or vegetables, protein and carbohydrates. Small children also need to have some fat in their diet to provide energy.

### Fruits and vegetables

Eating various colours of fruit and vegetables provides a good source of vitamins and minerals. They also contain fibre which is important to make your bowels work. Child-sized portions of five different fruit and vegetables are recommended every day. A portion is the amount that can fit into a child's hand.



# A Healthy Balanced Diet

## Protein

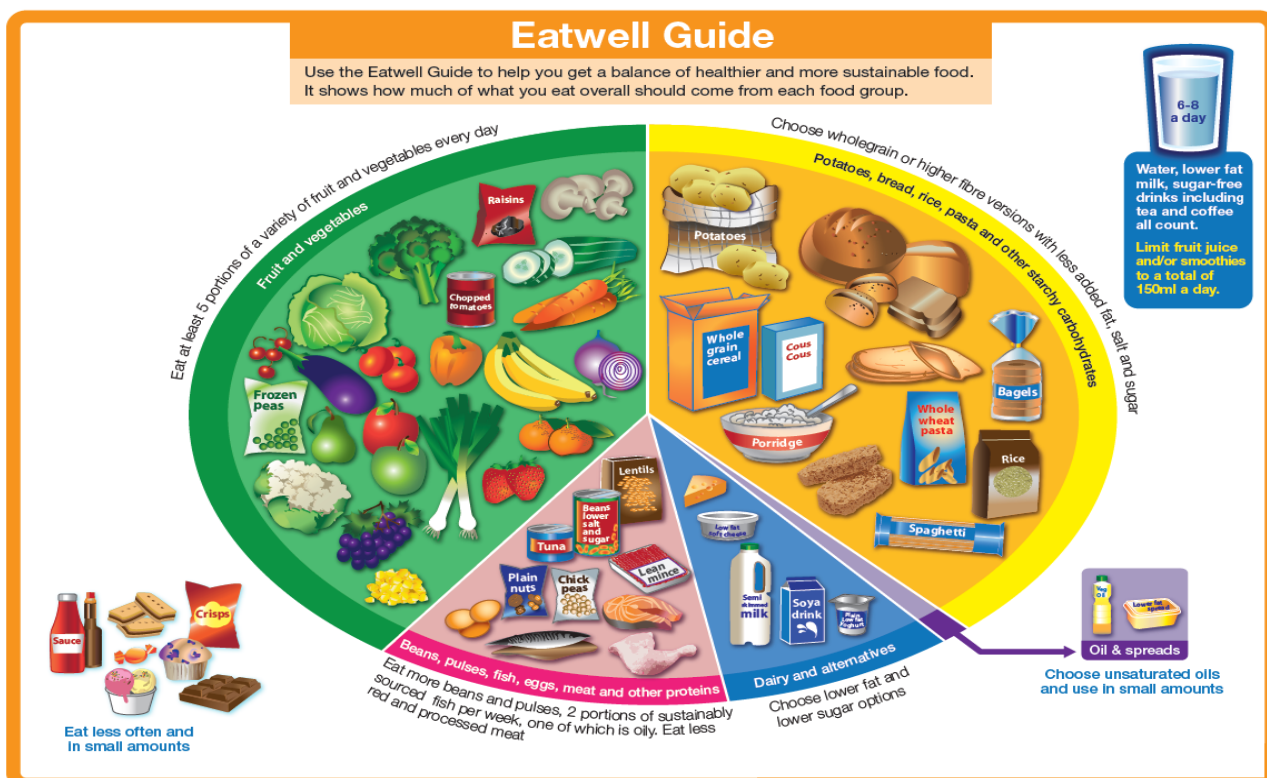
Protein like meat, fish, chicken, eggs, beans and pulses are important for children's growth and development.

## Carbohydrate

Carbohydrates like potatoes, bread, cereals, rice and pasta are a good source of energy and should be included at each meal.

## Fats

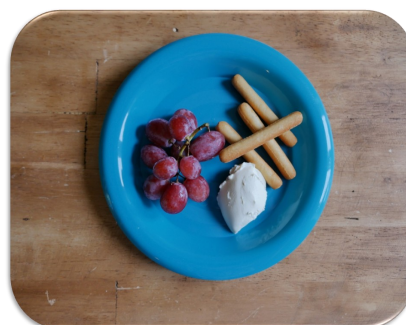
Choose healthier fats such as olive oil, sunflower and rapeseed oil. Full fat dairy products should be used under the age of 2 years. The Eatwell Guide can be followed from 2 years of age.



## Examples of meals and snacks



**Wheat biscuit with full fat milk & banana**



**Breadsticks, cream cheese & grapes**



**Wholemeal bread sandwich with tuna & cucumber, yogurt & fruit puree**



**Spaghetti bolognese, rice pudding**



**Oatcakes and hummus**

## But what if my child doesn't eat it?

There are ways to help your child achieve a healthy balanced diet.

You could serve items separately and let them choose from their plate. If they choose to only eat one item this time, that's ok. Having different foods on their plate will help in the long run.

**A Parents plate**

**Your Child's plate**



10 inch plate

If your child hasn't eaten their meal, try not to give in if they ask for less healthy options. You can offer one of their "safe" foods with meal and they can fill up on this. Otherwise, let them know that if they do not want to eat this meal, there will be something else later.

If your child will eat only a few foods, build on these. For instance if they like potato, try different types such as mash and roast potatoes. If they reject something they previously enjoyed, don't worry. Introduce it again later. If your child is hungry they will eventually eat a healthy option over time.

## My child won't eat...meat

- Chicken and fish are also good sources of protein.
- Try slow cooking meat so that it is a softer texture and easier to chew.
- Try minced meat dishes e.g. bolognaise, nachos, lasagne, cannelloni, shepherd's/ cottage pie.
- Try small slices of roasted meat e.g. chicken, beef, pork, ham.
- Try wafer thin sliced cold meats e.g. chicken, roast beef, pork, ham.
- Try burgers, meatballs, meatloaf, filled pasta, pancake/ crepe, rolls or dumpling with meat filling.

### Other foods contain protein...

- Try bean or nut spreads and dips e.g. Peanut butter, hummus, dahl.
- Try baked beans with toast or potatoes.
- Try bean or lentil chilli.
- Make eggy bread, omelette or frittata.
- Offer Quorn or Tofu.

**Fish**



**Baked Beans**



**Eggs**



**Ham**



**Cheese**



**Beef**



**Peanut Butter**



**Chicken**



**Hummus**





## My child won't eat...fruit

- Instead of offering whole fruits like an apple or banana, slice them up and arrange them on a plate.
- Mix mashed banana, stewed apple, pureed or chopped fruit into yogurt, custard, rice pudding, porridge or cereals.
- Try fruit or stewed fruit on pancakes, with cake or muffins.
- Make fruit smoothies, fruit ice lollies or frozen fruit yogurt.
- Add fruit to jelly. Make jelly with  $\frac{1}{2}$  fruit juice.
- Try fruit with savoury foods e.g. pear/ apple/ pineapple with meats or as a pizza topping.



## If your child won't drink milk try...

- Cheese e.g. soft cheeses such as cottage, ricotta or cream cheese and hard cheese such as cheddar or gouda.
- Yogurt or fromage frais.
- Custard/ semolina/ rice pudding.
- Milkshakes or fruit smoothies.
- Calcium fortified soya or oat milk, cream, yogurt or cheese.
- Add milk, grated cheese, ricotta or cream cheese to mashed vegetables, puddings/ desserts, soups or egg dishes like scrambled eggs, egg bread, omelette.
- Add cheese sauce or grated cheese to vegetables.
- Serve pasta with cream sauces and grated cheese on top.



## Want more information?

<https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide>

<https://www.parentclub.scot/recipes>



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