

## Providing a Healthy Food Environment in Early Years Settings

Welcome to your Early Years Alliance course entitled 'Providing a Healthy Food Environment in Early Years Settings', developed in partnership with the Early Years Nutrition Partnership.

### Course objectives

By the end of this course you will understand:

- why good nutrition in the early years is so important
- how to achieve a healthy, balanced diet
- the main four food groups and their benefits
- how much children should eat.

### Module 1: Nutrition Fundamentals for Children Aged One to Four

#### Why is nutrition in the early years so important?

- The nutrition children receive in their first 1000 days (from conception to two years) can have a positive influence on how they develop, grow and learn – not just now but for their whole life (First 1000 days 2016).
- Encouraging children to eat well and learn about food in their early years not only protects their health when they are young, but also sets the foundations for their future health and wellbeing (Children's Food Trust 2015).
- Children's food preferences and eating habits are also formed early in life with consequences for a range of health and development outcomes in later life.

Good nutrition can positively influence a child's:

- concentration
- physical development
- learning outcomes
- behaviour
- cognitive development
- long term future health.

Nyaradi, A et al (2013) and Infant and Toddler Forum (2014)

#### Still work to do

Despite the huge benefits that good nutrition can have upon a child's health, both now and in the future, there is a lot of work to be done to improve nutrition in the early years.

The National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) is a UK based survey designed to assess the diet, nutrient intake and nutritional status of the population. The latest survey results reveal that children aged less than 10 years are currently consuming:

- too much energy from saturated fats

The information in this course was current in September 2018

Whilst EduCare Learning Ltd. have made every effort to ensure that the courses and their content have been devised and written by leading experts who have ensured that they reflect best practice in all aspects, EduCare Learning Ltd. exclude their liability of the consequences of any errors, omission or incorrect statements to the fullest extent permitted by law and EduCare Learning Ltd. make no warranty or representation as to the accuracy, completeness or fitness for purpose of any statements or other content in the course.

No part of this material may be reproduced or utilised in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system without permission in writing by EduCare Learning Ltd.

# EduCare<sup>®</sup>

- not enough fibre
- not enough vitamin D
- not enough oily fish.

## Still work to do

Children also consume too much of their energy from free sugars. Free sugars are the sugars added to foods by the manufacturer, cook or consumer and the sugars found in honey, syrups and unsweetened fruit juices (SACN 2015). The main sources of free sugars in children's diets came from:

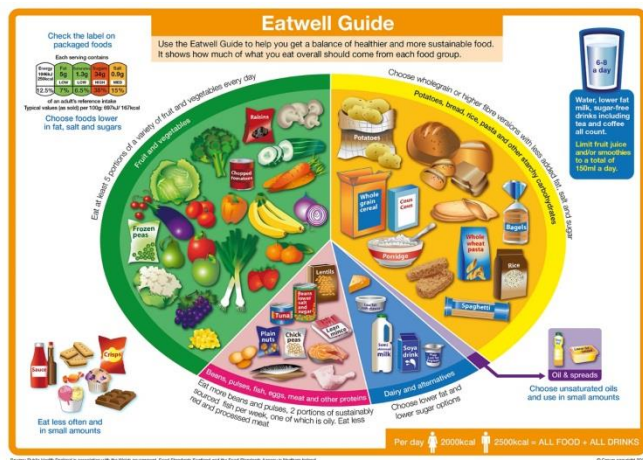
- cereals and cereal products
- soft drinks and fruit juice
- sugar, preserves and confectionary.

(NDNS 2018)

More than one in five children are overweight or obese by the time they start primary school. Childcare practitioners have an important role to play in establishing healthy eating habits from a young age. (NCMP 2016).

## How to achieve a healthy balanced diet in the early years

Public Health England's Eatwell Guide is an evidence-based, visual tool demonstrating how a healthy, balanced diet can be achieved by consuming a variety of different foods from each food group in the correct proportions.



## Four main food groups

The four main food groups are:

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

The information in this course was current in September 2018

Whilst EduCare Learning Ltd. have made every effort to ensure that the courses and their content have been devised and written by leading experts who have ensured that they reflect best practice in all aspects, EduCare Learning Ltd. exclude their liability of the consequences of any errors, omission or incorrect statements to the fullest extent permitted by law and EduCare Learning Ltd. make no warranty or representation as to the accuracy, completeness or fitness for purpose of any statements or other content in the course.

No part of this material may be reproduced or utilised in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system without permission in writing by EduCare Learning Ltd.

## Group 1: Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy foods



### What foods?

Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta, couscous, chapatti, bagels, naan bread, pitta bread, yam, noodles, breakfast cereals (if low in sugar and salt), plantain, cassava, quinoa, bulgar wheat, crackers, oatcakes, rice cakes, plain scones and other starchy foods.

### How much?

For children over the age of two years around one third of the diet should be made up of these foods. This can usually be achieved by including these foods at every mealtime (breakfast, lunch and tea) and at least once a day as part of snacks.

### Why are these foods important?

- They provide energy and vital fuel for all body tissues, especially the brain.
- These foods can also provide a variety of B vitamins which are important in energy production and for a healthy nervous system.
- Some foods from this food group have been fortified with other vitamins and minerals. For example, breakfast cereals are often fortified and can be a useful source of fortified iron.
- These foods, especially the wholegrain varieties such as brown bread, whole-wheat pasta and brown rice, are also an important source of fibre.

## Group 2: Fruit and vegetables



### What Counts?

All fruit and vegetables fresh, frozen, tinned (in natural juice or plain water), dried. Fruit juices should not be served in early years settings.

### How Much?

The information in this course was current in September 2018

Whilst EduCare Learning Ltd. have made every effort to ensure that the courses and their content have been devised and written by leading experts who have ensured that they reflect best practice in all aspects, EduCare Learning Ltd. exclude their liability of the consequences of any errors, omission or incorrect statements to the fullest extent permitted by law and EduCare Learning Ltd. make no warranty or representation as to the accuracy, completeness or fitness for purpose of any statements or other content in the course.

No part of this material may be reproduced or utilised in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system without permission in writing by EduCare Learning Ltd.

- Aim for at least five child-sized portions daily. A portion is roughly equivalent to the size of the child's palm.
- For children over the age of two years over one third of the diet should be made up of these foods.

## Why?

- Fruit and vegetables provide lots of vitamins and minerals.
- They contain fibre which is important for optimal digestive health.
- They also contain natural plant compounds such as polyphenols which may offer a range of health benefits.

## Group 3: Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins



## What?

Beans, lentils, baked beans, dahl, fish, fish products e.g. fish fingers, seafood, meat, meat products e.g. high-quality sausages or burgers, meat pate, chicken, eggs, tofu, hummus, tahini, soya beans, quorn, nuts, seeds.

## How much?

- These foods should be included in the diet in moderate amounts.
- It is important to include something from this food group at least twice a day for children. For vegetarian children it is a good idea to include these foods three times a day.

## Why?

These foods provide:

- Protein which is important for growth and repair of tissues.
- Iron for healthy development and immune system.
- Omega 3 fatty acids (from oily fish) which is important for normal heart function.

## Group 4: Dairy and alternatives



## What?

The information in this course was current in September 2018

Whilst EduCare Learning Ltd. have made every effort to ensure that the courses and their content have been devised and written by leading experts who have ensured that they reflect best practice in all aspects, EduCare Learning Ltd. exclude their liability of the consequences of any errors, omission or incorrect statements to the fullest extent permitted by law and EduCare Learning Ltd. make no warranty or representation as to the accuracy, completeness or fitness for purpose of any statements or other content in the course.

No part of this material may be reproduced or utilised in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system without permission in writing by EduCare Learning Ltd.

# EduCare®

Milk, cheese, paneer, yoghurt, custard, milk puddings, fromage frais and unsweetened, calcium fortified milk alternatives such as soya milk, oat milk, almond milk. Please note, rice milk is not suitable for children under the age of 5 years due to the levels of arsenic.

## How Much?

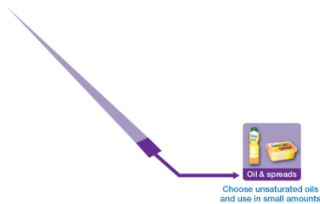
- Dairy foods and calcium fortified alternatives should be included in moderate amounts in young children's diets.
- Young children should have about 3 portions of dairy foods or calcium-fortified alternatives a day.

A variety of different dairy foods across the day are encouraged.

## Why?

- Calcium for strong bones and teeth.
- Protein.
- Vitamin A for healthy eyes, skin and immune system.
- Vitamins B2 and B12 for energy production.

## Other: Oils and Spreads



## What:

Butter, lard, ghee, olive oil, sunflower oil, rapeseed oil, vegetable oil, nut oils, coconut oil, avocado oil.

## How Much?

Unsaturated oils and spreads should be included in small amounts.

## Why?

Unsaturated oils and spreads are healthier kinds of fats. All oils and fats contain a lot of energy, in the form of calories. Over-consumption of oils and fats can lead to excess energy intake and weight gain so should only be included in small amounts.

Some oils and fats contain vitamins, such as vitamin A, D and E.

The information in this course was current in September 2018

Whilst EduCare Learning Ltd. have made every effort to ensure that the courses and their content have been devised and written by leading experts who have ensured that they reflect best practice in all aspects, EduCare Learning Ltd. exclude their liability of the consequences of any errors, omission or incorrect statements to the fullest extent permitted by law and EduCare Learning Ltd. make no warranty or representation as to the accuracy, completeness or fitness for purpose of any statements or other content in the course.

No part of this material may be reproduced or utilised in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system without permission in writing by EduCare Learning Ltd.



These foods are not shown in the main pictorial Eatwell Guide, but are placed to the side to demonstrate that they are not an essential part of a healthy balanced diet.

### **What:**

Crisps, biscuits, cakes, pastries, ice cream, chocolate, sweets, confectionary, deep fried foods, sauces and condiments such as ketchup, mayonnaise, soft drinks, juice drinks, fizzy drinks.

### **How Much?**

These foods are not needed in the diet and so, if included it should only be in small amounts and infrequently.

Visit <https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/food-facts/sugar> for useful information on how to help families to reduce their sugar intake.

### **Why?**

These foods provide lots of energy in the form of calories, but are usually very low in vitamins or minerals. Children should avoid filling up on these instead of eating more nutritious foods from the other food groups.

### **Oral health in the early years**

Dental erosion, or acid erosion, is the irreversible loss of tooth hard matter due to acids. The most common cause of dental erosion is acidic foods and drinks and, in particular, soft drinks, fruit drinks, fruit juices and carbonated drinks.

Tooth decay is different to dental erosion and occurs when bacteria living on dental plaque, feed from sugars causing the production of acid. It is these acids that cause the erosion of tooth enamel leading to dental caries or cavities.

The latest oral health survey revealed that 24.7 percent of 5-year-olds suffer with tooth decay (PHE 2016) and tooth extraction under general anaesthetic is the biggest cause of hospital admissions in children in England (Oral Health Foundation 2014).

Visit <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/taking-care-of-childrens-teeth/> for more information on taking care of children's teeth.

### **Oral health in the early years**

The information in this course was current in September 2018

Whilst EduCare Learning Ltd. have made every effort to ensure that the courses and their content have been devised and written by leading experts who have ensured that they reflect best practice in all aspects, EduCare Learning Ltd. exclude their liability of the consequences of any errors, omission or incorrect statements to the fullest extent permitted by law and EduCare Learning Ltd. make no warranty or representation as to the accuracy, completeness or fitness for purpose of any statements or other content in the course.

No part of this material may be reproduced or utilised in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system without permission in writing by EduCare Learning Ltd.

The enamel surface of teeth begins to erode when exposed to foods or drinks with a pH level (measure of acidity) below 5.5. The lower the pH the more acidic the food or drink is.

Click on the segments below to reveal a drink and its pH level. Those highlighted in red indicate drinks acidic enough to cause dental erosion.

Drink	pH level
Water	7.4
Milk	6.8
Fizzy water	4.96
Pure orange Juice	4.09
Lemonade	3.15
Orange flavoured juice drink	3.08
Cola	2.37

Plain milk and water are preferable for dental health and are the only drinks suggested for early years settings.

## Summary

In this module we have covered why good nutrition is so important in the early years. We also looked at the main four food groups, what foods are in them, why they are part of a healthy balanced diet and how much children should have on a daily basis. We also highlighted the pH level of a variety of common drinks and concluded that water and milk are the only tooth-friendly drinks for children.

To keep up to date with guidance on feeding young children, visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby>

Start4Life is part of Change4Life, the nationwide campaign to help adults and families to eat well and move more. Start4Life also provides resources for Early Years providers on healthy eating and activity for toddlers and pre-school children.

You are now ready to complete the corresponding questionnaire. Simply close this window to save your progress and click 'Questionnaire 1' to undertake the questions.

You are now ready to complete the corresponding questionnaire. Simply click **Questionnaire 1** to undertake the questions.