



PATIENT INFORMATION

HELPING YOUR CHILD EAT BETTER



ENCOURAGING YOUR CHILD TO EAT

Many children go through a stage of being faddy about their food. Here are some practical suggestions to help.

- Relax, and make meal times fun, enjoyable and stress-free social occasions.
- Eat together if possible, as your child will learn from you.
- Use brightly coloured plates and cups and present food in a fun way.
- Don't let mealtimes become a battleground. Try to stay calm; take a step back to avoid becoming impatient or aggressive.
- If the TV is a distraction turn it off, but if your child will only eat with the TV on - leave it on.
- If your child refuses to eat, leave the plate for 20 - 30 minutes. If your child has not eaten take the plate away without any comment, and wait for the next meal or snack time. Be patient if your child is a slow eater.
- We recommend you do not force your child to eat.
- Be very positive and praise your child for food that is eaten. Ignore food that isn't eaten.
- Don't battle for one more mouthful. If your child says they are full then let them leave something on the plate.
- Don't bribe your child to eat a disliked food.
- Try inviting your child's friend to tea.
- Try not to show your child you are anxious about their food refusal.
- Try incentive charts or other rewards if your child eats well but do not use food as a reward.

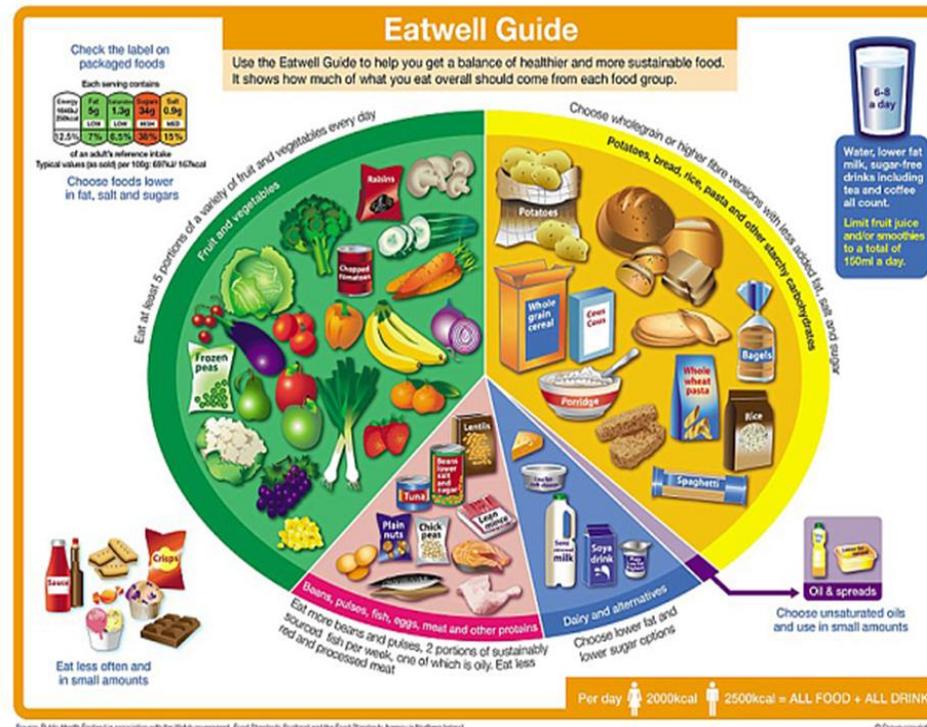
WHAT FOODS SHALL I GIVE AND WHEN?

- It may help to give a large plate with small quantities initially and offer more if all food is eaten.
- Do not take away food and offer a completely different or preferred food if the first one is refused.
- Keep the foods on separate areas of the plate. Each food should be distinguishable and not mashed together.
- New foods need to be offered several times before children will accept them. It is a good idea to offer a new food alongside a food your child will accept.
- Finger foods are often easier to manage as children can feed themselves. Try sandwiches, sausages, cheese slices, crackers, breadsticks, potato wedges, vegetable and fruit slices, fish / chicken goujons.
- Offer 3 regular meals and limit snacks to 2 daily rather than letting your child eat continuously through the day.
- Offer two courses – one savoury and one sweet.
- Avoid saying they will only receive dessert if they eat their vegetables. This can negatively influence a child's preference for certain foods.
- Don't focus on the foods your child doesn't like. Think of the foods they do like. We all have likes and dislikes.
- Avoid giving snacks too close to mealtimes and give drinks after meals to ensure that their appetite at mealtimes is not reduced.

FRUIT & VEGETABLES

Encourage 5 small portions per day

- * Fruit and vegetables are a good source of vitamins and minerals.
- * Offer fruit and vegetables at each meal.
- * Fresh, canned, dried, frozen and juice all count.
- * Use fruit for snacks and desserts.
- * Try to include some fruit and vegetables at each meal.
- * Try blending fruit with milk or yogurt to make a fruit smoothie.
- * Try raw vegetables with dips.
- * Try fruit with dipping sauces.



BREAD, RICE, POTATOES, PASTA and other starchy foods

Eat at each meal.

- * These foods should be the main source of energy in our diets and should be offered at every meal.
- * They provide B vitamins which are essential for growth, and some calcium and iron.
- * Try cereals or porridge for breakfast.
- * Try chapatti, pitta bread, rice, tinned spaghetti, pasta, or couscous.

MEAT, FISH and alternative protein sources

- Aim 2 portions a day

- * These foods are good sources of protein, vitamins and minerals, especially iron. They are needed for growth and repair.
- * Chicken, fish fingers and fish in sauces, meat, sausages, egg, pulses, baked beans, chick peas, chicken nuggets, quorn and tofu products are all good sources of protein.

FOOD & DRINKS HIGH IN FAT OR SUGAR

- * Young children have high energy needs. Fat is an important source of calories in childhood and provides vitamins A & D.
- * Limit foods containing sugar as they contribute to tooth decay. Offer sugary foods at mealtimes and look after your child's teeth.
- * Common snacks eaten by children are crisps, sweets, chocolate and fizzy drinks. They may be high in energy but do not contain many vitamins and minerals. More nourishing snacks are milk-shakes, yoghurts, sandwiches, cereal bars, toast, crackers and cheese.
- * Try monounsaturated spreads and oils instead of saturated spreads and oils.

MILK AND DAIRY FOODS

Aim for 3 servings per day

- * These foods provide most of your calcium. This is essential for healthy bones and teeth. They are also a good source of protein, vitamins and minerals.
- * Good sources are milk, cheese, yogurt, fromage frais, milk puddings.
- * Your child should take 1 pint milk per day or equivalent :-
1 yogurt or 30g/1 oz cheese contains the same amount of calcium as 200ml/ one third of milk.

INVOLVING YOUR CHILD

- * Eat somewhere different and fun.
 - ⇒ Go on a picnic.
 - ⇒ Eat in the garden.
 - ⇒ Put a rug on the lounge floor.
 - ⇒ Eat in a tent / den.

- * Involve your child in preparing and cooking and make food preparation fun.
 - ⇒ Peel potatoes.
 - ⇒ Wash vegetables.
 - ⇒ Make cakes.
 - ⇒ Read out and follow a recipe.
 - ⇒ Use children's cook books.

- * Involve your child in choosing part of the meal, e.g. rice, pasta or potatoes.

- * Let your child choose a meal occasionally.

- * Let your child pick a filling for a sandwich or one item for their packed lunch.

- * Provide your child with his / her own special cutlery or use chopsticks as a novelty.

- * Take your child shopping and let them pick one or two new foods to try.

- * Try food enjoyed by TV or famous characters or TV character foods.

- * When trying a new food, select one which has a similar feature to an accepted food, e.g. texture, taste, colour, temperature. For example, if cordial is accepted, fruit juice could be offered, and then fruit smoothie, then milk shake then milk.

- * Try simple and exotic foods or unusual flavours - your child may prefer one type more than the other.

- * Experiment with sauces or gravy to see if your child prefers them.

- * If your child won't eat vegetables – disguise them in soups, stews, puree and add to mashed potato.

Many children go through phases of refusing to eat certain foods or at times refuse to eat anything at all. This is a normal stage. Children can be wary of new foods and take time to learn to like them.

Food refusal is also a way of showing independence and is a normal part of growing up.

It may help to discuss things with friends or family for reassurance but if the problem shows no signs of improving or you are concerned about your child's health contact your GP or health visitor for advice.

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust

Covering the Alexandra Hospital, Redditch, Worcestershire Royal Hospital and Kidderminster Treatment Centre.

Tel: 01905 733953

Email: wah-tr.paeds.diet@nhs.net

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Thursday from 8.30am to 4.30pm and Friday: 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that a voicemail service is in use at busy times, but messages will be returned as quickly as possible.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.