

FOOD

ZONE

KEY HEALTHY EATING MESSAGES FOR SCHOOLS

Diet and lack of physical activity have been shown to be risk factors in the development of the following conditions that can affect children and young people

- Dental Decay
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Diverticulitis
- Coronary Heart Disease
- Cancers especially bowel cancer

A huge body of scientific evidence supports the above list. The published report “National Diet and Nutrition Survey: young people aged 4-18 years” illustrates that young people are eating too much sugar, salt, and saturated fat and not enough fruit and vegetables[♥]

An aim of the Health Promotion Service in relation to healthy eating is to encourage our school population to adopt eating, drinking and physical activity habits, which promote good health and reduce the risk of these nutrition related diseases. A diet that contains a variety of different foods in the right proportions will provide all the nutrients known to be required to support growth, development and the maintenance of good health. Well-nourished and watered pupils are likely to be more receptive to teaching and will learn better. Evidence shows that behaviour can also improve. Children and young people have to make their own choices about their diet. To do this they need reliable information about food, nutrition and lifestyle and have access to affordable healthier choices and drinking water.

[♥] National Diet and Nutrition Survey: young people aged 4-18 years (ISBN 0-11-621265-9)

Key Messages

1 Enjoy your food

2 Eat a variety of foods

3 Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables. 5 portions a day if possible

4 Have some bread, potatoes, cereals, pasta or rice at each meal.

5 Include dairy produce, meat, fish or pulses, in meals each day

6 Keep fatty, sugary and salty foods to a minimum

7 Drink plenty of liquid

8 Be physically active for at least one hour a day

Key messages explained:

1. Enjoy your food

Eating should be an enjoyable and pleasurable experience for everyone. Make meal times an occasion.

2. Eat a variety of foods

The Balance of Good Health Guide leaflet shows the five food groups and illustrates the proportions which should be aimed at.

Research indicates that the messages need to be presented as “foods” to choose, rather than nutrients and that children are more receptive and more likely to respond to positive rather than negative messages about eating

3. Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables

Choose fresh, frozen, tinned or dried. Try not to add sugar or salt or choose fruit in syrup. Five portions of fruit and vegetables (400g) should be eaten a day to protect against cancer and heart disease. Fruit juice can count as one of these.

One in five children do not eat any fruit and three in five eat no leafy green vegetables. Those that do eat fruit and vegetables, consume on average only two portions a day.

4. Have some bread, potatoes, cereals, pasta or rice at each meal.

Eat all types including some high fibre kinds. Foods in this group include breakfast cereals (some of which have added vitamins) noodles, cornmeal, chapattis, naan and pitta bread. White flour is fortified with calcium making white sliced bread a valuable contributor to a balanced diet

Obtaining energy from this food group will provide better nutrition than eating more foods from the fat and sugar groups.

5. Include dairy produce, meat, fish, or pulses in meals each day.

Moderate amounts of meat, fish and alternatives are needed. This group includes eggs, nuts, beans and pulses.

Dairy produce is needed for calcium This includes milk, yoghurt, cheese and fromage frais. . Low fat varieties are the best choices. $\frac{3}{4}$ pint of semiskimmed milk a day is good to aim at. Skimmed milk contains more not less calcium than whole milk.

6. Keep fatty, Sugary and Salty foods to a minimum

Avoid adding fat, sugar and salt to foods. Only have foods like cream, chocolate, crisps, biscuits, pastry, cake, puddings, rich sauces and sweets occasionally rather than every day. If sugary foods or drinks are taken it is better for teeth to confine these to meal times.

7. Drink plenty of liquid

Many children are chronically dehydrated.

Children need to drink more water ☐ at least 3-4 glasses per day for young children.

☐ at least 6-8 glasses per day for older young people ♥

Dehydration may have the following effects:

- Thirst can often be mistaken for hunger
- Lack of water is often the trigger for day time fatigue
- A mere 2% drop in body water can trigger fuzzy short term memory, trouble with basic maths and difficulty focusing on the computer screen or the printed page
- Dehydration can contribute to headaches, poor concentration and reduced mental performance
- Physical and sporting performance can be affected by dehydration
- Health problems which include urine infections, constipation, wetting / soiling problems and bad breath can result from not enough liquid intake
- Unhealthy skin and hair can develop from not drinking enough. ♥

Ideally children should have at least 3 fluid breaks per day at school

- *Pure clean water is best*
- *Milk at break is also healthy and provides valuable calcium and vitamins*
- *Sweet and fizzy drinks are not healthy and will damage the teeth*

WATER SCHEMES NEED COST NOTHING AT ALL

Water on Desks

Several schools in Cornwall encourage the children to bring reusable bottles of tap water from home and they keep them on their desk.

8. Be physically active for at least one hour a day

Physical activity has benefits not only for controlling bodyweight over the long term, by burning off extra calories that can turn to fat, but also in controlling appetite. To have beneficial effects on the heart and blood that help to prevent cardio-vascular disease, it is suggested that children should be encouraged to be active for at least an hour a day.

UK children are getting fatter. Studies show that this is not because they are eating more but because they are not active enough[♥].

♥ Claire Rayner patron of ERIC (Enuresis Research and Information Centre)

♥ Referenced in Be Cool in School Information Pack produced by Dr Alison Merry Merseyside HAZ.

♥ Durin JVGA (1992) "Physical Activity Levels Past and Present in Norgan N (ed) *Physical activity and health* :20-27.Cambridge:Cambridge Press

Supporting Material

Publications:

1.The Chips are Down – A Guide to food policy in schools. Price £15

Available from:

The Health Education Trust
18, High Street,
Broom,
Alcester,
Warwickshire
B50 4HJ (tel 01789 773915)

2.Eating Well at School – a set of 3 free booklets available from the Department for Education and Skills (tel 0845 6022260) They provide practical guidance to help governors, head teachers, policy makers and catering contractors introduce and sustain the provision of healthy food in their schools.

3.Grab 5 – a project for Primary Schools wanting to encourage 7-11 year olds to eat more fruit and vegetables

- Model school food policy – a practical guide
- Grab 5! Action Pack – a toolkit giving background to the project and practical advice on activities schools can do around the promotion of healthy eating and fruit and vegetables
- Grab 5! Curriculum pack of classroom activities that integrates into and supports the Key Stage 2 curriculum.

Available from

Sustain
94 White Lion Street
London
N19PF
02078371228

These web sites may also be of help:

- www.dietproject.co.uk/toolkits/headstart.htm
- www.dfes.gov.uk/schoollunches
- www.nutrition.org.uk –teaches food safety
- www.grab5.com
- www.teethonline.org.uk

Selection of leaflets available from Health Promotion:

- Balance of Good Health Guide – Information for educators and communicators
- Snack Attack
- Packing a Healthy Lunch
- Intake – Magazine sheet for young teenagers
- Enjoy your food fight DK
- Smile – Food and teeth care for under 5s
- Eating Well for under 5s
- Food Safety Act
- Food safety – Food sense

Information Packs available on loan from Health Promotion

- Breakfast Clubs
- Water is Cool in School” is a national campaign, which aims to improve children’s access to fresh drinking water

Contacts for further Information:

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FOR FUTURE INFORMATION**