

# Healthy eating habits that last a lifetime



with



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Public Health  
Agency



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# Getting started

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Small changes can have a positive effect on children's health, now and in the long term. It's not about being perfect but about starting with one change and sticking with it. That gives you a small daily win. Keeping it up will be tough at times. But it's worth it as the good habits that our children learn at home will stay with them for life.

One of the best ways to start a healthier life as a family is to agree to make small changes together, one daily win at a time. Reaching agreement can be tricky, but one small change can start you and your family on the way to a healthier life.

## Let's do this together

Children accept changes more easily when the whole family does it together.

// We're all going to be healthier together. //

// We are doing this so we can all be a bit healthier. //

// During the week we are going to try more and more healthy things as a family. //

# Four tips to get you started



## 1

### Involve your children

- Pick a good time to talk about making changes.
- Explain why you are all making these changes, as a family.
- Ask your child for ideas of what changes they could make.

## 2

### Make one change at a time

For example you could:

- Swap a sugary breakfast cereal for a wholegrain one.
- Change to drinking water or milk with meals and cutting out sugary drinks.

**Here are some helpful phrases to get you started:**

//

We are going to start to eat healthier foods.

//

//

Let's have water or milk with our meals.

//

//

You, Granny, Grandad, Mummy and Daddy, we're all going to eat fewer treats too.

//

# 3

## Stay consistent and try to stick with it

- Decide on a plan to guide the family through the change.
- Reward the good changes.
- Limit the use of treats as rewards and not every day.
- Think about other ways to encourage your children, like hugs, kisses, encouraging words, or playing a game together.

Starting can be tough but it's worth it.

**Here are some simple ideas you could try**

//

Our snack after school is fruit, yoghurt or cheese and crackers. //

//

Let's all sit at the table together to eat breakfast every morning. //

# 4

## What you say matters when it comes to change

Be specific when praising your children, so that they know what they are doing well.

**You could use the following examples.**

//

Let's try a different vegetable every other day. //

//

Well done for having some water with your meal! //

//

Well done for trying that new fruit. We all like different types of foods. //

# Eating well

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Children need three regular meals a day and two or three small healthy snacks. Children copy what they see, so get the whole family eating healthily together.

## **To eat healthily we can make small changes to what we:**



add to the basket  
when shopping



eat at  
home



add to the  
lunchbox

## **Why not make one of these changes your daily win and add other small changes step by step?**

Cut down on treat foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar, such as:

- sweets
- bars
- chocolate
- crisps
- cakes
- ice cream
- biscuits
- sugary drinks

We know that cutting down on treats and saying no can be difficult. Try limiting treat foods to once or twice a week. If your children are hungry between meals and ask for a treat, give them healthy snacks instead.

## **Water or milk is best**

Giving your children water or milk instead of sugary juices or fizzy drinks is a great way to reduce the amount of sugar in their diet.



# Give children child-sized portions

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As parents we all want to make sure that children are getting the right amount of nutritious food to help them to grow, learn and play. The best thing to remember is small tummies need small servings of nutritious food to create healthy habits that last a lifetime.

**A child's appetite will vary from day to day.  
It depends on:**



the child's  
age



whether they are  
going through a  
growth spurt, and



how physically  
active they are

**It's important to give children enough different  
types of food and let them decide when they are full.**

- Use child-sized plates, bowls and cups.
- Use a small plate for children under five.
- Give kids smaller servings. A five-year-old needs about half the amount of food that an adult needs.





## **Give your children more vegetables, salads and fruit**

- Fruit and veg are good for you, and you should have at least five a day.

If your children can't manage five a day yet, try giving them smaller portions. Or get everyone to eat to one more serving of fruit, salad or vegetables a day to start with.



### **It's okay to start slowly.**

Try one serving a day and increase each week. Remember that fruit and veg in a recipe – like onions and tomatoes in Bolognese sauce, curry or cottage pie – also count.

# Sample weekly menu

	Breakfast	Snack
<b>Mon</b>	One or two cereal wheat biscuits with milk. (Add some fruit such as berries, chopped banana or raisins for variety.)	Natural yoghurt or plain fromage frais and fruit.
<b>Tue</b>	One or two oat cereal biscuits with milk. (Add some fruit such as berries, chopped banana or raisins for variety.)	Orange segments.
<b>Wed</b>	Slice of wholemeal toast with a little butter and a small glass of pure fruit juice.	A slice of brown bread and chopped banana.
<b>Thu</b>	Bowl of wholegrain cereal with milk. (Add chopped banana for variety.)	Cheese and crackers.
<b>Fri</b>	Bowl of porridge. (Add some fruit like berries, a chopped banana or raisins for variety.)	Wholemeal toast and boiled egg.
<b>Sat</b>	Slice of wholemeal toast with baked beans or scrambled egg and cherry tomatoes.	Natural yoghurt or plain fromage frais with chopped banana.
<b>Sun</b>	Omelette with lots of fresh or frozen vegetables.	Chopped apple and peanut butter.

Lunch	Snack	Evening Meal
Two slices of wholemeal bread with a cheese slice and tomato.	Fresh fruit, chopped or sliced.	Shepherd's pie. Eat with sweetcorn, green beans and a glass of milk or water.
Pitta bread with ham and salad.	Two crackers and cheese.	Vegetable and bean curry with boiled rice and a glass of milk or water.
Tortilla wrap with lettuce and a slice of chicken, plus a sliced apple and peanut butter.	Unsweetened breakfast cereal with milk.	Spaghetti bolognese and a glass of milk or water.
Pasta with tuna, sweetcorn and spring onion.	Packet of plain popcorn.	Baked salmon with vegetables, pasta and a glass of milk or water.
Bread roll with tinned tuna, lettuce, peppers, tomato and a small amount of mayo.	Natural yoghurt or plain fromage frais.	Roast breast of chicken (skin removed). Eat with carrot, parsnip, broccoli and a jacket potato, and a glass of milk or water.
Lean bacon and tomato bap.	Small bowl of homemade soup.	Fish pie with frozen vegetables and a glass of milk or water.
Couscous with salad (salad vegetables and mixed beans) with cheese or tuna.	Soda bread with a little butter.	Chicken casserole with lots of vegetables, a boiled potato and a glass of milk or water.



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