

Menu Rationale

Our daily menu provides each food group in the recommended amounts and portion sizes, in line with the national government guidelines set out in the **Eat Better, Start Better** and **Setting the Table** guidance. We closely follow the guidance of **First Steps Nutrition Trust for Children** under one year old.

Children need different amounts of specific nutrients at different ages, which differs from an adult diet. For example, a low-fat, high-fibre diet is not appropriate for young children, particularly children under two, as it may not provide enough energy, fat, iron or zinc and would be too high in fibre.

Good Nutrition is Essential for:

- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Developing good eating habits
- Good oral hygiene
- Reducing infections and childhood illnesses
- Reducing the risk of childhood obesity
- Promoting wellbeing and positive mental health
- Healthy body function and growth
- A nutritious and varied diet for children

Children's nutritional needs should be met through balanced meals and snacks containing food from five main food groups, which are:

Fruit and Vegetables

Ideally, children should eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. The portion size will vary depending on age, size and how active they are.

As a guide, one portion of fruit or vegetables will roughly fit into the palm of a child's hand.

Carbohydrates

potatoes, bread, pasta, rice, cereals and other starchy carbohydrates

Children need carbohydrates in each meal. However, children under two may struggle to digest wholegrain varieties. Too much fibre can fill them up quickly, preventing absorption of other essential minerals, such as calcium and iron.

Protein

meat, fish, pulses, beans

Protein is essential for several vital functions, including growth, brain development and maintaining strong, healthy bones. Children also need essential amino acids mainly found in animal products.

Dairy

milk, cheese, yoghurt and dairy alternatives such as soya products

Dairy foods, including milk, yoghurt and cheese, are an essential source of calcium and iodine in a child's diet. In addition to providing vitamins A, D and B12.

The NHS recommends:

- Semi-skimmed milk can be introduced from the age of 2, provided your child is a good eater and growing well for their age.
- Skimmed or 1% fat milk doesn't contain enough fat, so it is not recommended for children under 5.
- You can give children unsweetened calcium-fortified milk alternatives from the age of 1 as part of a healthy, balanced diet.
- Toddlers and young children under the age of 5 should not have rice drinks because they contain high levels of arsenic.
- If a child has an allergy or intolerance to milk, parents/carers must talk to their health visitor or GP. They can advise you on suitable milk alternatives.

Fats and Oils

butter, margarine, olive oil, sunflower oil, fish oil

Children do need some fats to grow and develop. However, too much fat is not recommended as it can lead to weight gain and obesity.

Butter, spreads, and oils add to taste, texture and enjoyment of food and are a source of concentrated energy for young, active children. They are also needed to help young bodies absorb vitamins including A, D, E and K.

Sugar and Salt

Soft drinks, cakes, biscuits, sugary pastries and desserts often contain poor-quality fats as well as salt. Children can eat these foods in moderation as part of a healthy, balanced diet, especially if they are being very active and burning lots of energy. However, over-consumption of foods and snacks high in added sugar, fat and salt is recognised as a main contributing factor to high obesity rates.

At Bright Horizons, we do not add salt to any of our meals and limit sugar where possible. For this reason, we have also removed highly processed foods from our menu (for example, sausages).

Daily Balance

The meals at our nurseries are prepared so that, cumulatively, they provide a balanced combination of food groups each day. This means that if a small portion of cake is served on a particular day, it is complemented by the nutritional value of the main meal.

For more information please visit our website

brighthorizons.co.uk/family-zone/our-food