

Dietary factors 6-18 year olds

Sugary and Fizzy Drinks

Sugary drinks are not recommended as part of a healthy and balanced diet. Water is the best drink for children and young people. Milk or fruit juice in suitable portion sizes are also fine. Squashes, sugary tea or coffee, fizzy drinks, flavoured water and large quantities of milk or fruit juice are not needed in a child's diet. It is best to encourage children to drink water. This can be flavoured with a small amount of fruit juice or sugar free squash and diluted gradually until water is accepted as the main drink. It is recommended to dilute fruit juice using 1 part fruit juice to 6 - 10 parts water. Tea contains tannin, which inhibits the absorption of iron and should not be given to young children at mealtimes. Tea and coffee also contain caffeine and should be discouraged in young children.

Energy and Sports Drinks

Sports drinks are no more beneficial than water and are unnecessary for children and adolescents who do average amounts of physical activity. Energy drinks are also unsuitable for children because of the high caffeine content and they should be discouraged.

Are You Sugar Savvy?

You can download the game from the [website](#) which shows how much sugar some soft drinks contain and encourages people to limit their intake and replace them with low-sugar or sugar-free options.

Portion Sizes of fruit juice



Fruit juice counts as 1 portion of fruit towards your '5 a day'. However, a portion is around 150ml. The above picture shows 150ml portions of apple juice served in 3 different glasses. The portion size appears to be larger when the fruit juice is served in a smaller glass as the glass is full.

Snacks

Unplanned snacks are often high in fat and sugar and contain large amounts of calories. Snacks do not need to be stopped. 3 healthy snacks daily can be included as part of a healthy and balanced diet. [The Change4Life website](#) has some snack swapper options.

Snack Swaps

Standard Product	Swap For	Saving
Blueberry muffin (100g) = 374kcal	Mini Blueberry muffin (30g) = 122kcal	252kcal
Mars Bar (51g) = 229kcal	Mars Bar Fun Size (18g) = 80kcal	149kcal
Walker's Ready Salted Crisps (25g) = 132kcal	Walker's Baked Ready Salted Crisps (25g) = 102kcal	30kcal
Packet of crisps from a garage or service station (50g)	Packet of crisps from a multi pack (25g)	132kcal
Share sized packet of crisps (175g)	Packet of crisps from a multi pack (25g)	624kcal
Haribo Tangfastics (215g bag) = 731kcal	Haribo Tangfastics (16g single bag) = 55kcal	676kcal

Lunch Boxes and School Meals

Many children and adolescents are given money to buy lunches at school or they may have a set amount of money to spend if they receive free school meals. Parents often assume that their children are protected from unhealthy foods and large portion sizes at school as there is a responsibility to protect the health of pupils. However, this is not always the case. Children should be encouraged to choose a healthy main meal, a healthy dessert and a sugar free drink at lunchtime.

Children often feel under peer pressure to have meals that are high in fat and sugar such as chips and pizza with a doughnut and fizzy drink. Although there have been campaigns to improve school meals and to ban unhealthy foods, the reality is that the majority of children choose not to buy healthy foods. This leads to huge amounts of waste and for this reason schools continue to offer pizza, fish and chips, large baguettes, burgers, cakes and biscuits.

In addition, unhealthy foods tend to be much cheaper than healthier versions. Children often won't choose to buy an apple for 60p when they can buy a huge flapjack for the same price or a packet of crisps for 10p!

Negotiating with a child or young person to encourage them to have healthier options at school lunches is often useful. This may include having a lunch box on 3 days of the week so that parents can control what goes into the lunch box. You can find some [lunch box ideas](#) by following the link.

Sending the child to school with a piece of fruit for mid-morning break can be helpful so that they don't have to use their money allowance on fruit. If the child does not want to change what they are eating, discuss portion sizes to encourage them to reduce the portion that they have at school, such as having ½ baguette at lunch and ½ baguette on the way home from school.

Food as Rewards

It is common for parents to offer food as rewards as they are cheap and readily available. Food rewards tend to be high in fat and/or sugar, such as chocolate, fast food, sweets or fizzy drinks. It is important not to offer foods as a reward for good behaviour as the child may learn that there is a link between being well behaved and food treats. This may increase frequencies of negative behaviours as the child learns that if they are badly behaved, they will be offered a food reward for being well behaved. In addition, food treats may lead to an association between eating high energy foods and feeling good, which can lead to comfort eating or emotional eating. See the list of non-food rewards below for suggestions:

- A new magazine or comic
- A bubble bath
- Read a story with mum or dad
- Play dress up
- Play on a video game for 30 minutes
- Watch a favourite television programme
- A trip to the park
- New music
- New clothes
- Keep a coin jar – add £1 for every pound lost or create your own reward system. The growing collection of money will be a visual reminder of what you've accomplished and get you motivated to add to it
- A trip to the cinema
- A trip to the zoo
- A new DVD
- New hair accessory or make up
- A hair cut

Lack of Physical Activity/Excess Screen Time

Older children who are overweight often need additional encouragement to be active. Be enthusiastic about going outside or even starting a competition on a computer game such as the Wii Fit. Gradually build up stamina and try to make any physical activity fun, inclusive and enjoyable. Incorporating physical activity into their daily routine such as walking to school and taking a longer route to school is useful to ensure that additional activity is consistent and realistic.