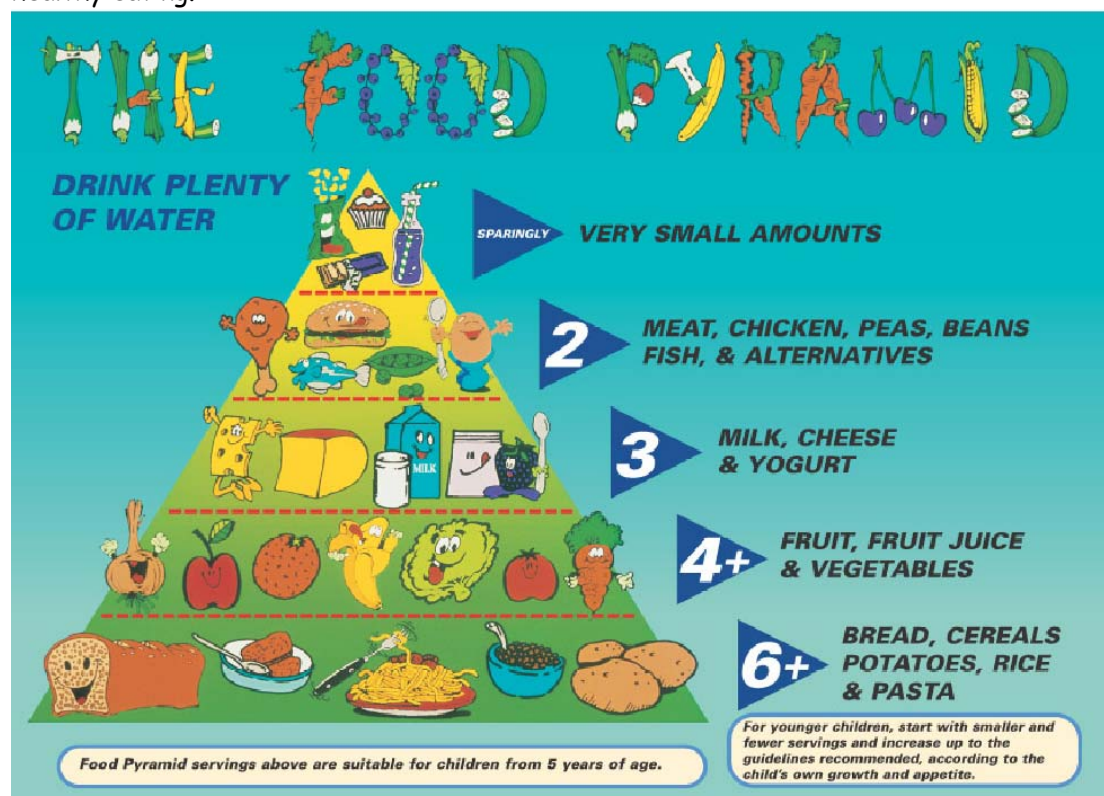


Children are growing and developing all the time. They have special nutrition needs. Just like a car needs petrol, healthy food supplies the essential fuel needed for growth. A balance is important but energy (calories), protein, iron, calcium and vitamin D are particularly important for growing children.

The Food Pyramid is a fun way of teaching children about the different food groups and healthy eating.



The pyramid is divided into five shelves. Each shelf represents a different food group. Choosing a **variety of foods** from **each of the bottom 4 shelves** will help ensure that children have a balanced and healthy diet.

Start at the bottom and work upwards.

The biggest bottom shelf is the **Cereals, Bread and Potatoes Group**  
**6 or more portions are recommended each day.**

Wholemeal and wholegrain varieties are especially good at providing fibre and a slow sustained release of energy.

- 1 slice wholemeal bread or small roll
- 1 average bowl breakfast cereal
- 1 small scone- plain / brown / fruit
- 2 wholegrain cream crackers or crispbread
- small bag plain popcorn
- 1 medium sized potato- boiled or baked
- 2 tablespoons boiled rice or pasta

The next group is the **Fruit and vegetables Group**  
**More than 4 portions are needed each day.**  
**This group provides vitamins and minerals.**

- 1 medium-sized fresh fruit, e.g. apple, orange, banana, pear
- $\frac{1}{2}$  glass unsweetened fruit juice
- Salad vegetables, e.g. tomato, lettuce, cucumber, carrot, celery
- Vegetable sticks made with carrot, pepper, celery, and cucumber
- 2 tablespoons cooked vegetables or salad
- Bowl of homemade vegetable soup
- Fruit smoothie

**Milk, cheese and yoghurt group**  
**3 portions a day are recommended**

This group is especially good at providing calcium for developing bones and teeth.

- 1 glass of milk
- 1 carton yogurt
- 1 yogurt drink
- 1 probiotic drink
- 1 oz cheddar / Edam / blarney cheese

Children **over** 2 years can have low fat varieties of milk, cheese and yogurt

**Meat, fish, chicken, egg, pulses( peas, beans, lentils)**  
**2 portions a day are recommended.**

Oily fish and chicken should be included weekly

Red meat (lean beef, lamb, pork) at least 4 times a week will provide essential iron.

Oily fish and eggs are good sources of vitamin D needed for bone health.

- 2 oz lean cooked meat, beef, lamb, ham, and corned beef
- 2 oz chicken / turkey
- 3oz fish, tuna, mackerel, sardines
- 2 eggs (not more than 7 per week)
- 1 oz peanut butter
- 4 oz beans

Try to grill or bake food rather than using the frying pan or deep fat fryer.

The **top shelf** of the pyramid contains foods which should be eaten "**sparingly**". It contains foods high in fat and sugar. These foods are considered harmful to health if eaten regularly:

Sweets, chocolate, crisps, savoury snacks, biscuits, cakes, takeaways, ready to eat convenience foods.

**Suitable drinks:**

Water and milk are recommended.

- Fizzy drinks and diluted squash contain added sugar, not good for teeth.
- Diet drinks although sugar-free are harmful to dental health because of the acid present in the fizz, they also contain artificial sweeteners.
- Fruit juices (apple/orange etc) contain concentrated natural sugars, not good for teeth but not so harmful if taken at the same time as food. They are usually a good source of vitamin C.
- No added sugar/sugar free squash contain can contain artificial colours and sweeteners.

### Breakfast

A car will not run if the petrol tank is empty! After a nights sleep, the body needs food. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Children who eat a healthy breakfast are better able to concentrate in school and are less likely to graze or pick later on in the day.

Choose from:

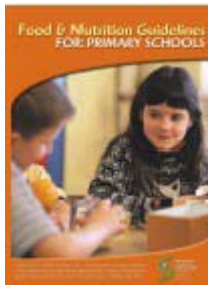
Fresh fruit or unsweetened fruit juices.

Breakfast cereals choose wholegrain types or porridge, add milk.

Wholemeal bread thinly spread with butter or margarine, jam or marmalade.

Milk to drink.

### School lunch



Children spend increasing amounts of their day at school as they get older. School lunch becomes very important, it provides one third of their nutrition for the day.

Many schools have a healthy lunch policy and there are guidelines free to download:

[http://www.healthpromotion.ie/uploaded\\_docs/Primary\\_schools.pdf](http://www.healthpromotion.ie/uploaded_docs/Primary_schools.pdf)



This leaflet is free to download from: [http://www.ndc.ie/publications/booklets/Healthy\\_Eats.pdf](http://www.ndc.ie/publications/booklets/Healthy_Eats.pdf)

**SUGGESTED LUNCHBOXES**

Variety is the key to a tasty, healthy and interesting lunchbox. Why not try some of these tasty lunchbox fillers?

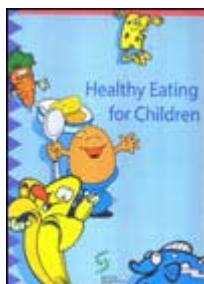
- Bagel with tuna, sweetcorn and cheese.
- Pita pocket with grated cheese, lettuce and tomatoes.
- Wholemeal roll with hummus, lettuce and peppers.
- Pasta salad with tomatoes, mushrooms, peppers and tuna/chicken.
- Chicken salad tortilla wrap with cheese and salsa.
- Wholemeal bread with ham, cheese, tomatoes and cucumber.
- Rice salad with vegetables and chicken.

**HEALTHY SNACKS**

Hunger pangs can strike mid-morning or mid-afternoon. Choose some of the following nutritious and tooth-friendly snacks.

- Fruit
- Bite sized vegetables
- Yogurt or fromage frais
- Cheese and crackers
- Scone and butter
- Unsweetened breakfast cereal and milk
- Fruit smoothie
- Toasted cheese slice
- Smooth peanut butter with breadsticks.

**NB** It is important to drink plenty of fluids to keep your body healthy and mind alert, so make sure to include a drink in your lunchbox. Milk and water are the best options.




This leaflet is free to download from:

[http://www.healthpromotion.ie/uploaded\\_docs/hput00117.pdf](http://www.healthpromotion.ie/uploaded_docs/hput00117.pdf)

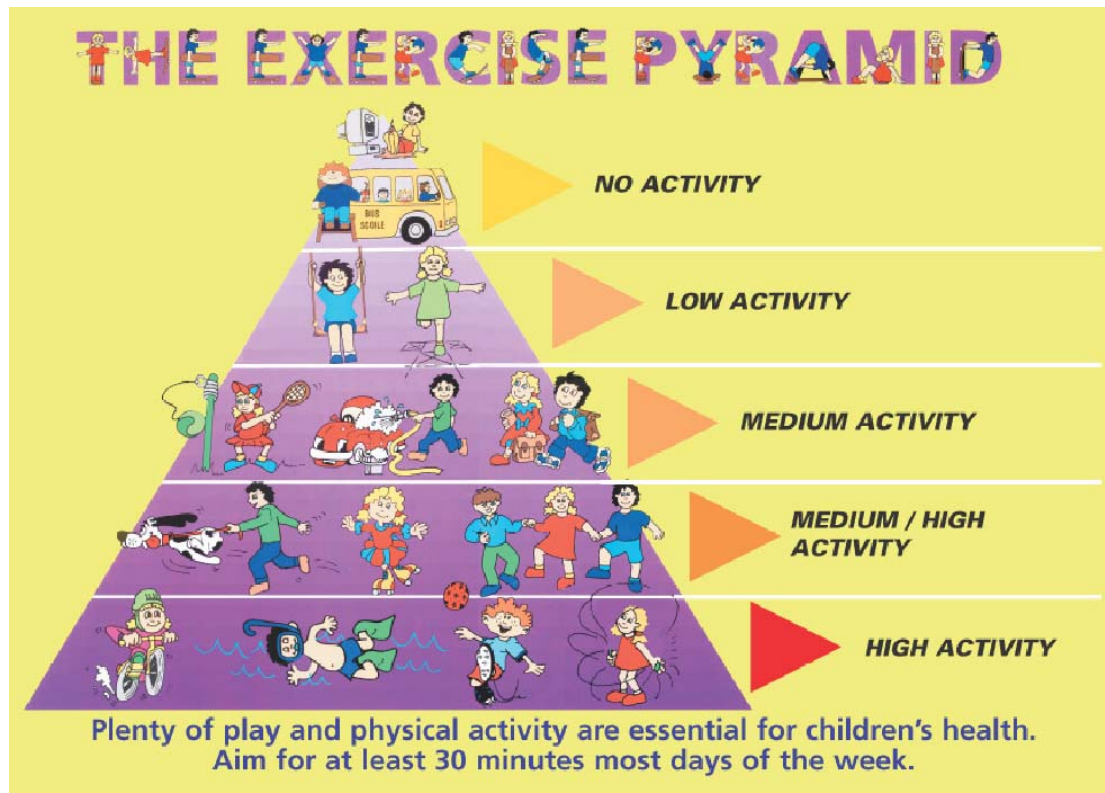
**4 OR MORE WAYS TO CRUNCH & MUNCH THROUGH YOUR LUNCH**

- **Slice tomato and/or cucumber**, put into a small bag and add to your lunchtime sandwich in school
- **Try fingers of raw vegetables** – carrots, celery or cucumber. Eat on their own or with yogurt as a dip
- **Bring a small carton of fruit juice** to school
- **Pack fruit with your lunch** – fresh or tinned fruit in its own juice or light syrup
- **If you like peanut butter** – top it with sliced or mashed banana just before eating, for a delicious treat
- **Munch on the Go** – have a piece of fruit or drink some juice after your sandwich or roll



## Food for sport

When you play a sport, you make sure you have the equipment you need, gloves for gaelic football and shin guards for hurling. You couldn't play the game very well without this gear. Following the healthy eating guidelines above will provide all the nutrition needed for training and matches. The right foods and drinks can help you be a better athlete.



Hurling, gaelic football, camogie all count as high activity

### Bring on the Liquids

You've probably seen athletes drinking water when there is a break in the action. That's because athletes need water before, during, and after exercise. When people sweat, they lose water through their skin. Sweating cools the body down, but if you lose too much water this way, you could get dehydrated.

If you get dehydrated you won't feel well or perform well. Serious dehydration can make you really sick. Drinking before, during, and after exercising (or an event) is the best way to stay hydrated. Don't wait until you're thirsty. Water is the best choice. Fruit juice mixed with water is another refreshing drink. But avoid fizzy drinks, especially caffeinated ones.

A sports drink is OK once in a while, but remember that these drinks have a lot of sugar and calories. Water is still the best drink for your body and it contains no calories.

### Time to Practice or Compete

When it's time to practice or play, you'll get energy from the foods you've been eating

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all week. But it's still a good idea to eat well on that day. If you're going to eat a meal, have it 1 1/2 to 3 hours before practice or game time. If you have a full stomach, your body will need to spend energy digesting food, leaving less for you to use in your game or practice.

But you don't want to be hungry either. Bring a snack, especially for long practices, competitions, or all-day events. Half a sandwich, fresh or dried fruit, or a small handful of nuts are all good snacks. Sports bars, or energy bars, are convenient, but they aren't necessary for athletes. You can get the same energy from healthy foods.

Avoid sugary stuff like fizzy drinks, chocolate bars, biscuits and sweets right before you practice or compete. You might get a little energy boost, but it will fade fast leaving you feeling drained. But eating and drinking the right stuff will help you play your best.

The above written by Ruth Charles, Paediatric Dietitian  
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