

Healthy Living

Healthy Eating



Whether you run a nursery or look after children as a childminder, it is important to set children up to eat well for life, from the start. The early years are formative in so many aspects of health. It is in these years that we have the best opportunity to support the development of healthy food preferences and build good eating habits which will influence their lifelong health.

We know that offering a variety of different foods and exploring them with our senses (taste, texture, colour, smell) from an early age increases acceptance of new foods and provides a more diverse diet with the range of nutrients, vitamins and minerals needed for health.

Taking positive steps to provide appropriate amounts of energy and nutrients while encouraging a positive attitude to a range of food is important.

The document 'Early years foundation stage nutritional guidance' has been put into place to support this in April 2025, practitioners can use this to support their practice further.

[Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance](#)

Some questions to start your thinking-

- What are you currently doing to ensure you are meeting the nutrition needs of children in your care?
- What can be done to support parents to provide healthy choices in their child's lunch box?
- Do your policies reflect your healthy eating ethos and the procedures you have in place to support children in developing healthy attitudes to food?

Task 1

Task a member of staff with researching the [Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance](#) with the expectation that they feedback the key points at the next team meeting.

Task 2

To encourage a food variety in early years we often say, “eat the rainbow”, how about making your very own rainbows together with the children?

Use the clip below to support this activity.

[Healthy recipes: Let's make a food rainbow | Toddler | Health for Under 5s](#)

Task 3

Design an activity to involve children which will encourage them to select healthy options. How many ideas can you come up with?

Some good examples to get you started of children making healthy choices-

- At snack time the children choose from a variety of healthy options and drinks. They pour their own drink and cut their own fruit/veg.
- Role play- using real foods

- Messy play - [Messy-Food-Play.pdf \(leicspart.nhs.uk\)](https://leicspart.nhs.uk)

[Messy Food Play for Fussy Eaters! \(thesensorysubmarine.com\)](https://thesensorysubmarine.com)

[Sensory food education - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK](https://gov.uk)

Task 4

Working in partnership with parents is an important part of promoting healthy eating.

- Could you plan a parent workshop/open session to promote a healthy lifestyle?
- Could you create a display to promote healthy eating?
- Could you share resources such as access QR codes- E.g., [Healthier Families - Home - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)
- Could you invite parents in to cook with their children?
- (Did you know, Leicestershire Nutrition and Dietetics Service offer free Big Cook Little Cook sessions for childcare settings in the city). [LNDS for Early Year's Settings](https://www.leicestershire-nutrition-dietetics.nhs.uk)
- Do you involve parents in creating menus in your setting?
- Do you use ideas from other cultures and represent a diverse range of worlds food?

Task 5

Using a story, maybe one listed on this card, talk about:

- Different foods
- Balanced meals and portioning out foods.
- Healthy foods, treats etc – try to avoid using the word ‘treats’, as it can skew food preference and place a higher value on items, we typically call treats like chocolate, crisps etc. consider using ‘sometimes foods’ or ‘less healthy foods’.

Why not get the children to make their own dinner plates. Give them lots of pictures from magazines, supermarket recipes, boxes and packets. Let them cut them out and stick them on a paper plate or a card which can be coated in PVA to make an exciting placemat that the children can use at mealtimes.

Below are some exciting books to look out for:

- Lima’s Red Hot Chilli by David Mills and Derek Brazell
(ISBN No: - 10-1852694203)
- Handa’s Surprise by Eileen Browne
(ISBN No:0744536340)
- Ellies Breakfast by Sarah Garland
(ISBN No: 0099692619)
- A Pumpkin Soup Story by Helen Cooper
(ISBN No: 0385604939)

Task 6

Take your children to a local library and let them find as many stories as they can about food. These can include recipe books, magazines, recipe cards.

Task 7

Use the resources below to explore this topic further.

You could ask a member of staff to explore a link each and bring their findings to a team meeting.

- Links to other information:
- Understanding how to put together a healthy balanced diet: [Help for early years providers : Children aged 1 to 5 years guidance](#)
- Cost effective healthy food: [Help for early years providers : Cost-effective healthy food](#)
- Portion size guide: [What's a healthy portion for your little one? - Health Under 5s \(healthforunder5s.co.uk\)](#)
- Snack and mealtime information: [Tasty toddler mealtimes | Toddler | Health for Under 5s](#)
- First Steps Nutrition: [www.firststepsnutrition.org](#)
- Food Labels: [Food labels - NHS](#)