

# Healthy Eating Guidelines



**RAFFLES**  
INTERNATIONAL  
SCHOOL (NURSERY)

## **General Guidelines for Staff and Parents**

Food and nutrients help to form strong teeth and bones, muscles and a healthy body; a good diet can also protect your child against illness now and in the future.

Young children's need for energy and nutrients is high but their appetites are small and they can be fussy eaters too. It can therefore be a challenge to get a child's diet right. Pre-school children can normally eat the amount they want, even if it seems they're not taking in very much. At this age children are often good at regulating their appetite. As their appetites tend to be small, providing food on a 'little and often' basis is recommended. If they are not hungry, insisting on larger amounts of food can create a battle and lead to longer term issues with food.

Children's intake should be based on the following to ensure that they get all the important nutrients:

### **Carbohydrates/Grains**

At least one kind of starch carbohydrate such as bread, rice, pasta noodles, cereals or potatoes should be served with all meals. These provide the energy needed to learn, play and live – preferably including oatmeal, brown rice and wholemeal bread (rather than white). Young children use a lot of energy and therefore this is an important area for them.

### **Fruit and Vegetables**

Children should have at least five servings a day, where a serving is about a handful in size. Frozen or canned fruit and vegetables can be just as nutritious as fresh varieties. These are a good source of Vitamin A and C which promote healthy skin and eyes and support the immune system to help prevent illness.

Vegetables can be eaten raw or cooked. Raw vegetables need to be thoroughly washed before being eaten.

### **Milk and Dairy Products**

These are an important source of calcium. Children should have the equivalent of 500-600ml of milk a day. Full fat milk should be used for the under twos, but semi-skimmed may be given from the age of two if the overall diet contains enough energy and nutrients. Milk can be used on cereals or in drinks, puddings and sauces. Cheese, fromage frais or yoghurt can be given instead of some milk. Grated cheese, cheese spread or cheese portions can be used on sandwiches or toast. These help to develop healthy teeth, bones and muscles.

### **Meat, Fish and Alternatives**

Meat, fish or alternatives, such as eggs, beans and pulses such as lentils and chick peas, should be eaten once or twice a day.

Children should have at least two servings of fish a week, one of which should be oily. Shark, swordfish or marlin should be avoided as these contain high levels of mercury which may affect a child's developing nervous system.

All these help to promote strong muscles and bones and provide energy. Oils support brain function although solid fats should be avoided.

### **Foods to Avoid**

Fatty and sugary foods should be avoided, for example, biscuits, crisps, sweets, chocolate and sugary drinks.

## Snacks

Parents are asked to provide the children with a mid-morning snack which supports our healthy eating policy.

### Examples of food and drink to provide for snacks by parents:

Foods to provide.	Examples of foods that could be provided.
<b>Starchy food</b> (provide a starchy food as part of at least one snack each day)	Breadsticks, crackers, oatcakes, rice cakes, small pitta, bread or bread roll.
<b>Fruit and vegetables</b> (provide as part of some snacks)	Fresh sliced fruit – apples, bananas, grapes. Vegetable sticks – carrot, cucumber.
<b>Milk or dairy food</b> (can be provided as part of snacks)	Cubes of cheese. Plain yoghurt or fromage frais. Whole milk (for children aged one to two) or semi-skimmed (for children aged two and over).
<b>Cakes, biscuits, sweet foods and crisps</b>	Sweet foods like cakes, biscuits, sweets and dried fruit must <b>not</b> be given as snacks as these can cause tooth decay. Instead provide starchy foods and fruit or vegetables. <b>Avoid</b> salty snacks such as crisps.
<b>A drink</b>	Provide milk or water to drink between meals. <b>Do not</b> provide Squash or fizzy drinks, as these can lead to tooth decay.

## Packed lunches

If a packed lunch is provided we ask that this is stored in a vacuum bag/box with a cold pack to ensure that food is kept at a suitable temperature for storage.

### Examples of food and drink to include by parents as part of a packed lunch:

Foods to provide	Examples of foods that could be provided
<b>A portion of starchy food</b> (provide a variety of different starchy foods each week, including a wholegrain variety for lunch and tea once a week)	White or wholegrain bread, rolls, pitta bread or wraps. Chapattis. Plain naan bread. Bagels. Cooked pasta, rice, noodles, couscous or potato.
<b>At least one portion of fruit and/or vegetables</b> (provide a variety of different fruit and vegetables each week)	Carrot, cucumber, pepper or celery sticks. Lentils included in daal. Grated carrot in sandwiches or wraps. Fresh fruit such as sliced apple, banana, grapes, mixed chopped fruit or strawberries. Dried fruit such as raisins or apricots. Fruit juice (diluted half juice, half water).
<b>A portion of meat, fish, eggs, beans or other non-dairy sources of protein</b> (provide a variety of different foods each week)	Sliced meat, poultry or fish in sandwiches, rolls or wraps, or by itself. Sliced egg in sandwiches, rolls or wraps. Meat alternatives such as tofu in salads. Pulses such as kidney beans, chickpeas, lentils, as part of bean salads.
<b>A portion of milk or dairy food.</b>	A pot of yoghurt or fromage frais. Cheese in sandwiches or wraps. Whole milk (for children aged one to two) or

	semi-skimmed (for children two and over) to drink.
<b>Desserts, cakes, biscuits and crisps</b>	Desserts, cakes and biscuits made with <b>cereals, milk or fruit only</b> . <b>Avoid</b> salty snacks such as crisps.
<b>A drink</b>	Fruit juice (diluted half juice, half water). Whole milk (for children aged one to two) or semi-skimmed (for children aged two and over). Water.

Any hot foods for lunch should be separately stored in a vacuum flask in an insulated box or bag and labelled as lunch.

**Remember - Tips for packing a lunch box and keeping food fresh:**

- Remember to label your child's lunch box as other children might have the same design!
- Soft lunch boxes seem to be the most popular choice for young children, as they are light, and easy to carry.
- Please note that the nurseries do not have cooling or heating facilities.
- To keep food cold, use a re-freezable ice pack, or freeze a bottle of water (remember not to overfill). You can also freeze tubes of fromage frais, or cartons of fruit juice overnight and pop them in their lunch box in the morning.
- Buy some small lidded pots/boxes as they are an ideal size for a portion of fruit, salad or dip.
- Young children prefer things cut or divided into small portions – a whole apple can be overwhelming for a pre-school child. Cut it into 4 or 6 pieces, it is more likely to be eaten and enjoyed.
- Remember to pack a teaspoon if you send a yogurt, fromage frais or jelly!
- Put in a sheet of kitchen roll or napkin, to wipe sticky fingers and mop up any spills. .
- Make lunches the night before and keep them in the fridge. It saves that last minute panic in the morning.
- If you put a pure fruit juice drink and another fruit or vegetable option in your child's lunch box, your child will get 2 of their recommended 5-a-day.
- Even fussy eaters should be given a variety of different foods in their lunch box (plus a couple of favourites so you know they won't go hungry).
- While choice is good, with too many different foods in a packed lunch, it is very tempting to ignore the sandwiches for something which seems more interesting.

**'Fussy' Eating and Refusing Food**

Dealing with a fussy/faddy eater can be quite stressful. Food is one of the few things that a child has control over and refusing to eat or rejecting foods are common 'assertive' behaviours. Some experts agree this rarely leads to eating disorders.

If the child is thriving and there are no problems with growth and development, it is better to ignore the situation and it is more than likely they will grow out of it. Children do not voluntarily starve themselves as they are programmed for survival - as long as there is food available, children will make sure they get enough.

In addition, children are very good at using food to get attention – this should be ignored as they should not be given attention for negative behaviour but can be praised for positive habits. Adults worry that if fussy eating carries on long-term, it could stunt development. However, children with selective eating should not have any long term effects as long as their diets contain enough protein, carbohydrates, fat, vitamins and minerals - they will be healthy and grow normally – even if the same food is repeated over and over again. If a child is not upset or worried about eating, then there

is little that needs to be done. Repetitive/narrow diets can be accepted as children grow out of faddy eating in their own time.

### **Encouraging Good Eating Habits**

It is important that parents and staff promote a positive attitude and provide a good role model for healthy eating. The follow guidelines should be followed:

#### **Do's**

- Do give children time to eat their snack/ lunch or other meals – they should not be rushed. Such times should be seen as a social event. It is ideal if adults eat their own healthy meals and snacks along with the children.
- As adults, let children see that you enjoy eating healthy meals. They are more likely to eat foods that they have seen adults eat.
- Do praise children when they try something new - but don't overdo it.
- Do get children involved in cooking - this will increase their interest in the food, and they're more likely to eat a meal they've helped prepare.
- Do think of different ways to present foods. A child may refuse fresh tomato but accept a tomato based pizza, for example. Some parents disguise fruit and vegetables, pureeing vegetables into a mince-based dish, or using fruit purees in jellies and in cooking.
- Do set a time limit of, say 20-30 minutes for the meal. If the food isn't eaten in that time, take it away.

#### **Don'ts**

- Don't ever bribe children. It's a very common mistake to make but avoid it at all costs, particularly rewarding children with a pudding.
- Don't get cross: refusing food loses its appeal if you don't react.
- Don't provide an alternative meal - just remove the meal and make no comment. Offer a simple alternative like bread and butter and perhaps a glass of milk but never cook multiple meals as a child could misconstrue it as a game.
- Don't let a child fill up between meals on snacks, juice and fizzy drinks.
- Don't let a child hear you talking about how fussy they are. This will only make an issue of their eating habits and make them feel isolated and singled out.

#### **Try These**

- Make sure children are hungry before mealtimes.
- Let them serve themselves. Put the food in dishes so they can choose how much to take.
- Think small. A big pile of food on the plate can be off-putting for children. Try tiny broccoli florets, small squares of toast, super-thin apple slices.
- Serve a new food with a food they like: mix an unfamiliar food, like peppers, into pasta sauce, soup, or curry – but don't try and hide them under other foods otherwise you risk the whole meal being rejected.
- Keep trying! If a food is rejected, it doesn't mean they will never eat it. Children's tastes do change over time. It can take up to eight to 10 attempts to get a child to eat a new food.