Nutrition matters in early years settings

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4 Children Conference
Let’s talk quality! Making early years quality achievable for all
10th October 2013

Today’s presentation will cover:

- Importance of nutrition in early childhood
  - Current dietary intake and nutritional status of young children in UK
  - Food provision in early years settings
- How to meet the EYFS welfare requirement for food and drink
  - Rationale and evidence base for voluntary food and drink guidelines
  - Defining a healthy, balanced nutritious meals and snacks in practice
  - Encouraging children to eat well
  - Practical tools and advice

The Children’s Food Trust

Our Vision: A healthy future for every child

Our mission: Our children must be healthy in order to reach their full potential in life. Through ensuring a balanced diet in their early years and school days, together with better family cooking skills, lifestyle and food education.

The Children’s Food Trust exists to help protect every child’s right to eat better – and so, to do better
The Children’s Food Trust

Our goals:
All our work drives one or more of these three goals.
1. We will protect child health through promoting relevant legislation and guidelines, and monitoring their impact.
2. We will maximise the number of children benefiting from the legislation and guidelines in educational settings.
3. We will help improve children’s out of school eating and lifestyle behaviours.

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Nutrition in First 1,000 Days

The first 1,000 days are critical for health and development:
“The period from the start of a mother’s pregnancy to the child’s second birthday is a critical window when a child’s brain and body are developing rapidly and good nutrition is essential to lay the foundation for a healthy and productive future”

Source: Save the Children (2012)

Importance of early intervention

Importance of children’s early years

- children’s early years influence their health, development, learning, attainment and economic participation
- eating habits during children’s early years influence growth, development and academic achievement in later life
- giving every child the best start in life is crucial to reducing health inequalities across the life course

Key message
The early years of a child’s life are critically important
- in their own right
- as a foundation of success at school and for all adult life

Establishing healthy eating habits – impact on growth and behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diet and healthy weight</th>
<th>Diet and academic achievement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EarlyBird Diabetes Study cohort of 307 healthy children</td>
<td>Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) cohort looked at association between dietary patterns at age 3, 4, 7 years and academic achievement at Key Stage 2</td>
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<td>Early weight gain and metabolic health (e.g. blood pressure)</td>
<td>Dietary patterns divided into three groups: junk food, ‘health conscious’ and ‘traditional’</td>
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<td>Most excess weight gain before puberty is gained before 5 years of age</td>
<td>Junk food diet at age 3 years associated with lower school attainment at Key Stage 2, independent of later diet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weight at 5 years closely predicts weight at 9 years</td>
<td>Source: Feinstein (2008)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Important to ensure healthy weight during the early years – key to targeting public health interventions</td>
<td>Source: Gardner (2009)</td>
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Young children’s diets and health in England

Evidence from national dietary surveys suggests diets of young children in England are:
- low in fruit and vegetables
- low in iron, zinc and vitamin A
- high in saturated fat, sugar and salt

Consequences for children’s health:
- more than a fifth of children are either overweight or obese by the time they join reception class
- type II diabetes starting to appear in children
- poor dental health in many young children
- more than one in four young children are at risk of iron deficiency
- cases of rickets appearing more frequently
Rationale and evidence for the Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England

Advisory Panel recommendations

• Maintain Early Years Foundation Stage welfare requirements for food and drink
• Develop clear, practical guidance and support tools
• Deliver a comprehensive training package
• Provide a consistent approach to quality improvement/benchmarking for parents
• Conduct a survey of food provision and consumption in early years settings.

Food provision in early years settings

Limited information available suggested:

• not enough energy, carbohydrate and some essential minerals such as iron and zinc
• too much salt and added sugars
• too many fruit and vegetables
Recommendations for guidance

Laying the Table report recommended ‘Government should introduce guidance that helps practitioners meet the welfare requirement for the provision of healthy, balanced and nutritious food and drink.’

Advisory Panel on Food and Nutrition in Early Years (2010)

“I recommend that the Government act on the report of the Advisory Panel for Food and Nutrition in Early Years and consider providing further advice and good practice for practitioners.”

Dame Clare Tickell (2011)

Meeting the welfare requirement for food and drink

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) section 3.45 states ‘Where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, they must be healthy, balanced and nutritious’ (2012)

New national guidance Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England (2012)

The practical guide

Seven sections

01 Eat better, start better: why healthy eating matters for young children
02 Planning menus
03 The food and drink guidelines
04 At a glance – the food and drink guidelines for each meal and snack
05 How to encourage children to eat well
06 Practical tools and resources
07 Where to find additional information
What is a healthy, balanced, nutritious diet for children aged one to five years?

Defining the nutritional framework

- Food and drink guidelines, legislation and healthy eating advice should be evidence-based to ensure that it meets nutritional requirements:
  - providing appropriate amounts of energy
  - providing adequate amounts of nutrients
  - encouraging dietary diversity – eating variety of foods
  - limiting foods high in saturated fat, added sugar and salt
  - guiding appropriate portion sizes

Balanced diet for children aged 1-5 years

- Based on a wide range of foods from four food groups below:
  - Starchy foods
  - Fruit and vegetables
  - Meat, fish, eggs and other non-dairy sources of protein
  - Milk and dairy
- More energy from fat than diets of older children and adults – choose unsaturated fat not saturated fat
- Not too much salt or added sugar

Key message:
Eating a wide variety of foods from these groups will provide children with the good balance of nutrients they need.
Summary of the four food groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food groups</th>
<th>Examples of food included</th>
<th>Main nutrients provided</th>
<th>Recommended servings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Starchy foods | Bread, potatoes, and sweet potatoes, starchy root vegetables, pasta, noodles, rice, other grains, breakfast cereals | Carbohydrate, fibre, B vitamins and iron              | Four portions each day  
Provide a portion as part of each meal (breakfast, lunch and tea) and provide as part of at least one snack each day |
| Fruit and vegetables | Fruits, loose canned, dried and juiced fruit and vegetables, and pulses | Carotenes (a form of vitamin A), vitamin C, zinc, iron, and fibre | Five portions each day  
Provide a portion as part of each main meal (breakfast, lunch and tea) and with some snacks |
| Meat, fish, eggs, beans and non-dairy sources of protein | Meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, eggs, meat alternatives, pulses, nuts | Protein, iron, zinc. Oily fish provides omega fatty acids, vitamins A and D | Two portions each day  
Provide a portion as part of each main meal (breakfast, lunch and tea) (Two to three portions for vegetarian children) |
| Milk and dairy foods | Milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais, custard, puddings made from milk | Protein, calcium, and vitamin A | Three portions each day provided as part of meals, snacks and drinks |

Information about each food group

- For each food group, there is information to explain:
  - the types of food and drink included in the food group
  - why the food group is important
  - Food safety information
  - guidelines for planning menus
  - typical portion size information.

Understanding the guidelines

Key:

- Food and drink guidelines – use these to plan your meals and snacks
- Good practice – consider these when planning your meals and snacks
- Food safety – these list food safety issues for young children

Definitions:

- Limit: where the guidelines advise that food or drinks should be limited, these should be provided no more than once a week. This will help to decrease the amount of salt, sugar and saturated fat in children’s diets and increase the variety of food and drinks they are offered.
- Avoid: where the guidelines advise that food or drinks should be avoided, these should not be provided as part of any meals or snacks.
Guidelines for starchy foods

- Provide a portion of starchy food as part of each meal
- Provide a starchy food as part of at least one snack each day
- Provide at least three different varieties of starchy food across each day and for each meal each week
- Provide a variety of wholegrain and white starchy foods each week
- Limit starchy foods which have been fried
- Limit canned pasta in sauce

‘At a glance’ information by meal

- Section 4 ‘At a glance’ lists the food and drink guidelines by meal occasion
  - Breakfast
  - Mid-afternoon and mid-afternoon snacks
  - Lunch
  - Tea
- Particularly useful if catering for one meal or snack
- This section also includes examples of meals and snacks meeting the food and drink guidelines

How does a healthy, balanced diet for children aged one to five years differ from that needed by older children and adults?
The eatwell plate illustrates healthy eating advice for children aged five and over, and for adults.

http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/eatwell-plate.aspx

Young children:
- are growing quickly
- have high energy and nutrient requirements for their size but
- they have small stomachs.

Therefore,….

How does a healthy, balanced diet for children aged one to five years differ from that needed by older children and adults?

- Children need to eat regular meals and snacks.
- A low-fat, high fibre diet based on the eatwell plate is inappropriate for young children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adult woman*</th>
<th>Child aged 2 years*</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Energy EAR (kcal)</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average weight (kg)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy requirement in kcal/kg</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Children under five years old need a relatively higher fat, lower fibre diet compared to older children and adults.
- Children aged between two and five years old who are growing well can have semi-skimmed milk.
- Provide food containing unsaturated fat from plant and fish sources, and limit consumption of saturated fat.
- Limit consumption of food and drinks high in added sugar – these provide calories but few nutrients and can lead to tooth decay.
- Limit consumption of salt: it can lead to serious health conditions in later life such as stroke, heart disease and kidney problems.
Encouraging children to eat well

- Developing a food policy and putting it into practice
- Communicating with children and their families
- The eating environment and social aspects of meal times
- Celebrations and special occasions
- Providing food for all

How to encourage children to eat well

- Encouraging fussy eaters to eat well
- Food brought from home
- Learning about and through food
- Cooking with children
- Food safety and hygiene
- Sustainability
- Protecting children's health

How to encourage children to eat well
The nutrient content of food and drink provided for children depends on the portion size of the food and drink offered.

Typical portion sizes included in the practical guide are given as a range:
- Smaller portion sizes for children aged one to two years
- Larger portion sizes for children aged three to four years

However, children’s appetites will vary, and they should be encouraged to eat healthy food according to their appetite.
Key points to remember:

- Not necessary to weigh portions of food: the portion sizes in the guide are listed as weights and household measures – we would not encourage settings to weigh portions of food.
- Visual guide: the portion size information in the guide can be used as a visual guide to how much is a typical portion for children aged one to five years – some will eat less than this and some children will eat more.
- Settings can manage portion sizes by:
  - offering initial portions to children that are smaller than the typical portion sizes in the guide, and then offering seconds of different foods to children when they would like more;
  - encouraging children to serve themselves at lunchtime – great for development of motor skills and counting.

Early Years Code of Practice for Food and Drink

Demonstrate approach to food and nutrition meets national guidelines and best practice

Seven principles:

- Food policy
- Consultation and communication
- Varied, seasonal, sustainable menus
- Meals, snacks and drink meet the new national guidelines
- Catering for dietary requirements
- Positive and welcoming eating environment
- Adequate staff training
- Consider signing up

Checklists
Overview of programme

Two year programme (2011-2013)

Year 1 (2011-2012):
- Development and testing new Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England and practical tools.
- Development and piloting a comprehensive training package in collaboration with five local authorities/primary care trusts.

Year 2 (2012-2013):
- Implement a wider roll out of a comprehensive training package up to 20 local authority areas.

Supported by: Department for Education Improving Outcomes for Children, Young People and Families Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) grant.

Aim: to support healthier food provision in early years settings and families with young children.

Three outcomes
1. Improved healthier food provision for children under five in early years and childcare settings and at home.
2. Increased food, nutrition and healthy cooking knowledge and skills for the early years and health workforce.
3. Increased food and nutrition knowledge and practical cooking skills for parents and families attending early years settings.
Supporting local authorities

Addressing health and wellbeing early years priorities by:

- tackling food poverty and health inequalities
- providing early intervention to maintain healthy growth and weight
- supporting settings to meet the welfare requirement
- providing information and training
- ensuring access to up-to-date, consistent, evidence-based food and nutrition advice
- engaging parents

Findings from setting audit visits

Settings’ approach to food and nutrition

- Many settings had a food policy in place before the first visit, but the level of detail included in the policy increased
- Settings already communicated with families about the food that was given to children, but the number of settings displaying menus for families to see increased
- The number of settings planning menus in advance to include all meals and snacks increased
- All settings already catered for children’s special dietary requirements
- Settings paid attention to creating a good eating environment, but the number encouraging children to serve themselves at mealtimes increased

Findings from setting visits

Changes to food provided at breakfast: increase in
- Variety in starchy foods provided
- Choosing breakfast cereals lower in sugar
- Provision of a portion of fruit

Changes to food provided at snack times:
- Increase in provision of starchy foods as part of some snacks
- Variety in the types of starchy foods provided as part of snacks
- Fewer settings providing dried fruit as part of snacks

Changes to food provided at lunch and tea: increase in
- Variety of wholegrain and white starchy foods
- Variety of different protein sources
- Provision of oily fish at lunchtime or teatime
- Variety of different desserts

Plus, more settings
- Checking typical portion sizes for meals and snacks
- Choosing foods lower in salt and sugar
- Minimising use of ready made sauces and stocks
Feedback from programme participants

Local authorities and primary care trust commissioners

- Health and Wellbeing strategy
- Obesity strategy
- Early Years Foundation Stage
- Healthy child programme

Childminder: “I was over facing the children with big portion sizes. The practical guide gives clear, visual advice on the types and amount of food to provide; the recipes are simple too you don't have to be superstar chef!”

Nursery manager: “Displaying the Early Years Code of Practice is a clear sign to parents that our setting is committed to continually raising quality of food and drink standards for children in our care.”

Child centre: “we now feel confident to help them (families with young children) to cook healthy meals - it really is easier than they think.”

Health visitor: “I have used the practical guide, menu/recipe books in one to one sessions with parents at home and in the clinic to help them read labels and plan their menus.”

Observation of parents attending cooking sessions – “both adults and children are making new friendships, they are planning to do cooking sessions in each others homes.”

Accessing further information and support

- Accessing the guidelines: download guidelines and menu documents for free from the Trust website: www.childrensfodtrust.org.uk/eatbetterstartbetter or order hard copies
- Interested in training? face to face or e-learning pick up flyer or contact us
- Further support: any queries about the guidelines or the Eat Better, Start Better programme, contact us by
  - Email: early.years@childrensfodtrust.org.uk
  - Telephone: 0800 089 5001 or 0114 299 6901

Let’s Get Cooking at Home Learning Network

Contact us for more information:

patricia.mucavele@childrensfodtrust.org.uk
http://twitter.com/ChildFoodTrust
http://www.facebook.com/childrensfodtrust

Thank you – any questions?