

Healthy Eating Cue Cards for 1-4 year olds







Introduction – Why Is Healthy Eating Important for Children?


Healthy eating in early childhood is essential for a child's good health, growth and development. Eating a healthy diet during childhood reduces the risk of chronic diseases, obesity and some cancers. It is important that children develop good eating habits when they are young since these tend to follow through into adulthood, impacting both short and long term health.

Who Is the Resource For?

Early years care settings have a crucial role to play in creating a healthy nutritional environment and delivering healthy eating messages. This resource provides helpful tips to encourage those 1-4 years old in your care to eat well.

How Do I Use It?

The cue cards can be used in a number of ways:

1. As an information resource – the cue cards provide key messages to help improve your understanding of healthy eating.
 2. As a teaching resource – the cue cards contain activities to encourage children to eat healthily.
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Healthy Eating Guidance



Eat less often and in small amounts

Healthy Eating Guidance

Children should be offered food in the right proportions from the four main food groups each day to ensure they are getting a good balance of food and all the energy and nutrients they need. The choice of foods should ensure a variety of tastes, textures and colours.



Starchy Carbohydrates

5 portions/day

Carbohydrates are important for providing us with energy for the day. Provide a variety of carbohydrates – such as breads, rice, pasta, potatoes and oats.



Fruit and Vegetables

5 portions/day

Fruit and Vegetables should be provided in a variety of both type and colour. You can choose from fresh, frozen, tinned, dried or juiced.



Protein Foods

2 portions/day

Fish, eggs and meat help grow and build muscles. Limit the intake of processed meats and fish to once a week. Provide red meat at least twice a week.



Dairy

3 portions/day

Calcium is important for building strong bones and teeth. Always choose low fat and low sugar options.

Portion Size



Portion Size – Activity Session

Aim – To actively involve children in figuring out how much to eat.

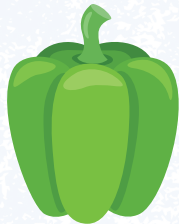
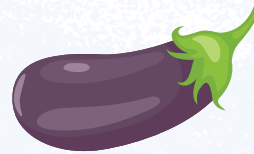
Portion Size – Top Tips

- A portion for a child is the size of their fist or what they can hold in their palm.
- Start meals with small servings and let the child ask for more if they are still hungry.
- Avoid making the child eat everything on the plate or eat more than they want to.
- Use smaller plates for younger children as adult-size plates could encourage them to eat oversized portions.
- Smaller plates and set mealtimes encourage children to eat slower.

Practical Activities

- Involve the children in the preparation of meals. A serving of rice is the size of an ice cream scoop so let the children use the scoop to serve “rice cream” on to their plates.
- Using kitchen scales, encourage the children to weigh out quantities of food required for meals.
- If scales aren’t available, have children use their hands to measure portion sizes. A closed fist is the right amount for a portion of pasta, rice, cereal, vegetables and fruit. A meat portion should be as big as the palm of their hand.

Fruit and Vegetables



Fruit and Vegetables – Activity Session

Aim – To teach children the importance of eating a range of fruit and vegetables to stay healthy (at least 5 a day, every day) and help them to name different fruit and vegetables.

Group Discussion Activity

Using the fruit and vegetable card on the reverse side:

- Pick a colour and get children to name/point to a fruit or vegetable of that colour on the reverse of this card that they have eaten. Explain that we all need to eat lots of different fruit and vegetables to be healthy. We should eat at least five different types every day.
- Ask the children if they can name the different fruit and vegetables on the card and ask them if they know where they come from (eg. trees or the ground).
- Ask the children to tell the person next to them one or two of the fruit and vegetables they have eaten in the last few days. Choose a few of the children to report what fruit or vegetables the person next to them has eaten.
- Ask the children to draw their favourite fruit and vegetable.

Sensory Activity

Prepare fruit and vegetables from the card for the children to taste as a non-meal experience.
Have the children:

1. Look at the fruit or vegetable and ask them to describe its colour and texture.
2. Pick up the fruit or vegetable and ask them to describe what it feels like (eg. soft, hard or squidgy).
3. Smell and taste the fruit or vegetable and ask them to describe the smell and taste.

Breakfast



Breakfast – Activity Session

Aim – To help children understand that breakfast provides energy to help them move throughout the day. Children should recognise that by adding fruit and vegetables they can have a healthier breakfast.

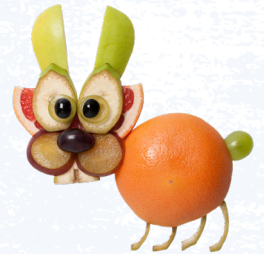
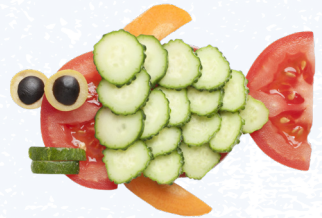
Group Discussion Activities

- Ask the children what their favourite breakfast is and ask them to draw a picture and colour it in.
- Discuss the breakfast menu in the childcare setting and what foods make a healthy breakfast.
- Ask the children why breakfast is important and why we must eat breakfast everyday.

Practical Activities

- As shown on the reverse picture card, make a 'banana sheep' share plate with the children. Leave the plate in the middle of the table and encourage children to lift banana slices to add to their porridge, pancakes or natural yoghurt.
- Toast pancakes and ask the children to create a pancake crab or pancake teddy bear as shown on reverse side. Encourage the children to name the different pieces of fruit before putting them on the plate. This can be repeated with toast, bagels etc.
- Explain to the children that eggs can be used to make a healthy breakfast. Demonstrate to the children how eggs can be boiled, scrambled, fried or used to make an omelette. Have the children taste each version and have them pick their favourite and explain why.

Snacks



Snacks – Activity Session

Aim – To help children understand why we eat snacks and how to make healthy snacks.

Group Discussion Activity

1. Talk about the snacks on the menu. Ask the children what they like best and why? Explain that snacks between meals produces energy which helps them to stay active and play.
2. Identify the fruit and vegetable animals on this card with the children and find out their favourites.
3. Call out a fruit or vegetable and ask children to point to and name the animals which contain that fruit or vegetable.
4. Ask the children to draw and colour in a picture of their favourite animal on the card.

Practical Activities

- Help children prepare the animal snacks on the reverse of this card, taking turns to prepare 'share' dishes, eg. the kiwi 'tortoise', orange 'goldfish' and cucumber 'caterpillar'. Children should have the opportunity to wash the food and help assemble the animal.
- Set up a snack table with a variety of fruit and vegetables. Encourage children to eat different types of food throughout the day.
- Have a 'taste experience' session with less familiar snack options, eg. tomatoes on toast, cucumbers or celery.

Hydration



Hydration – Activity Session

Aim – To encourage children to stay hydrated and drink water. Keeping hydrated means children can feel good, learn well and have energy to play. Children aged 1-3 should aim for 2-4 glasses of water every day. Children over 3 should aim for 4-5 glasses of water every day.

Hydration – Top Tips

- Make sure water is freely available and children are aware that they can help themselves. Ensure that children drink fluids at mealtimes. Place water on accessible tables or create a drink station where children can easily access a drink of water.
- Try adding fruit to the water eg. blueberries, raspberries or strawberries. You could also add slices of orange, lime or lemon.
- Prioritise water and whole fruit over fruit juice. If providing fruit juice, limit to meal times and dilute (one-part juice to ten parts water).
- Make drinking water fun for your child by using bendy, silly or coloured straws. You can let the children choose their favourite cups or water bottles.

Practical Activities

- Count out how many glasses of water children should be drinking using the visual on this cue card. Ask children how many glasses of water they have had to drink and find out why they might not drink enough.
- Encourage children to take turns to help design colourful signage for the water station, reminding them to drink throughout the day.
- Keep a chart for children to tick when they have had a glass of water. Praise children when they reach their target.
- On a warm day, chop up cucumber or mint leaves and add to a jug of cool water, with different groups of children taking turns to help prepare.

Handwashing



Wet your hands
with water



Apply soap to the entire
surface of your hands



Rub hands palm
to palm



Rub hands palm to palm
with fingers crossed



Wash your fingertips
and nails thoroughly



Rinse with water and dry
your hands thoroughly

Handwashing – Activity Session

Aim – To teach children the importance of handwashing, teach them how to wash their hands correctly and for how long.

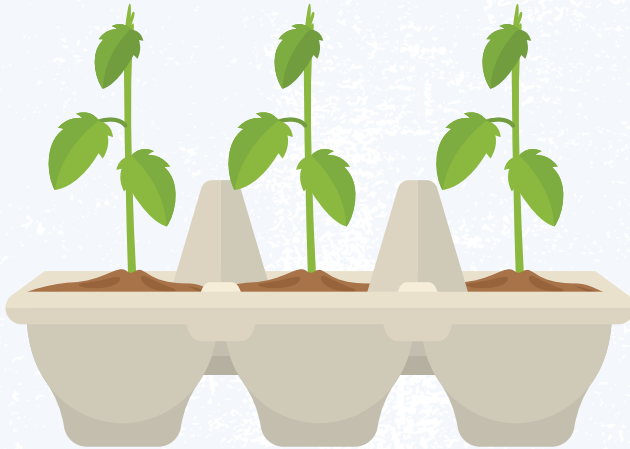
Practical Activity

1. Discuss with the children why we wash our hands. Explain that we have to wash our hands to keep them safe from germs so that they and those around them don't get sick.
2. Ask the children when we should wash our hands. Explain we should wash our hands when they are dirty, before and after eating or preparing food, after using the toilet, after touching animals and after blowing our nose or coughing.
3. Using the reverse of this card demonstrate to the children how to wash their hands. Have the children copy the actions on the card.
4. Children should wash their hands for 20 seconds. To help with the timing of handwashing encourage the children to sing "Happy Birthday" or teach the children the handwashing songs below.

"Twinkle, twinkle little star, look how clean my two hands are. With soap and water, wash and scrub. Get those germs off, rub-a-dub-dub. Twinkle, twinkle little star, look how clean my two hands are."

"Wash, wash, wash your hands, wash them nice and clean. Scrub them here (with hand motion scrubbing together), scrub them there (with hand motion scrubbing tops of hands) and scrub them in between (with hand motion scrubbing between fingers). Wash, wash, wash, your hands, play our handy game. Rub and scrub, scrub and rub, germs go down the drain HEY!"

Growing Your Own Food



Growing Your Own Food – Activity Session

Aim – To encourage young children to participate in the growing of food which is known to increase consumption of fruit and vegetables. This activity aims to teach children about where food comes from, what fresh produce looks like and how to develop their food preparation skills.

Practical Activity – Egg Carton Greenhouse

1. Cut the lid off an egg carton and set aside.
2. Have the children decorate the egg carton however they like to personalise their mini greenhouse.
3. Add potting soil to each hole (about $\frac{3}{4}$ full).
4. Sprinkle watercress seeds into each hole and then add a little water.
5. Cover the carton with cling film and place on an easy to reach windowsill.
6. Once the seeds begin to sprout, remove the cling film and water regularly.
7. Once the watercress reach 5cm, cut and add to a sandwich or a salad for a tasty nutritious boost.

Environment



Environment

Aim – To create an environment for children to eat healthily.

Environment – Top Tips

- Allow 30–45 minutes for mealtimes so that children don't feel rushed and have time to engage in the full sensory experience.
- Pair 'less liked' vegetables with 'liked' foods. Avoid using food as treats, instead praise the child eg. verbally or with stickers.
- Involve children in meal planning, food preparation and the serving of food to others and themselves.
- Verbally praise children for trying vegetables, by providing positive reinforcement. Engage children's senses when trying new foods by asking them about the colour, smell, sound, texture and taste.
- Promote healthy eating habits by explaining why the child should eat a certain food, encouraging them to try it and praising them when they eat well.

Practical Activities

- Encourage experiential learning by regularly involving children in a range of food activities including growing, preparing, cooking, serving and eating together.

Additional Resources



Eating well recipe book

Simple, cost-effective ideas for the whole family

FIRST STEPS NUTRITION TRUST

Eating well: Packed lunches for 1-4 year olds

FIRST STEPS NUTRITION TRUST

Nutrition matters for the early years

Feeding under fives in the 19

Good food choices and portion sizes for 1-4 year olds

FIRST STEPS NUTRITION TRUST

Public Health England
Protecting and improving the nation's health

The Eatwell Guide

Helping you eat a healthy, balanced diet

By What500 can help us feel our best – and make a big difference to our health and the health of our communities. It's important to know the signs and symptoms of malnutrition, and to know when to seek help. The proportion of food groups in the Eatwell Guide is based on the average needs of a healthy adult. It is not a prescription for what to eat, and it is not necessarily suitable for everyone.

Eating well: snacks for 1-4 year olds

FIRST STEPS NUTRITION TRUST

Early Years Resources

antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/cue-card-additional-resources



T. 028 9034 0160

E. envhealth@[antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk](mailto:envhealth@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk)
antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/healthy-eating-cue-cards