



Practical advice for healthy eating habits
from pregnancy to preschool

Portion Sizes for children aged 1-4 years

Our portion size ranges can be used as a guide for giving your young child a well-balanced diet with a combination of foods and drinks from the five food groups. They recommend how much to offer your 1-4 year old and have been designed to ensure that his or her energy and nutrient needs are met.

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The tables that follow cover each of the five food groups. The foods are listed in the first column, with the portion size (lower and upper ends of ranges) in the second column.







Standard measures have been used: 1 tablespoon is a 15 ml spoon and 1 teaspoon is a 5 ml spoon.

Food Group 1: Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods

Offer a serving at each meal and some snacks

BREADS	Range of portion sizes
Bagel	 1/4 plain bagel to 1/2 plain bagel
Bread roll	1/4 - 3/4 roll
Bread slices (fresh or toasted)	1/2 - 1 medium slice
Bread sticks	1 - 3 large breadsticks
Bun (e.g. hot cross)*	1/4 - 1/2 bun
Cream / wholemeal crackers	1 - 3 crackers
Crumpet	1/4 - 1 crumpet
Maltloaf*	1/2 - 1 slice
Naan bread	 1/8 - 1/3 naan
Oatcakes	1 - 2 oatcakes
Pitta bread	1/2 - 1 mini or 1/4 - 1/2 pitta
Rice cakes	1 - 3 medium rice cakes
Scone	1/2 - 1 small scone
Teabread*	1/2 - 1 1/2 slices

BREAKFAST CEREALS	Range of portion sizes
Dry flaked cereal (e.g. Cornflakes / Rice Krispies / Cheerios™)	 3 - 6 heaped tablespoons
Museli*	2 - 4 tablespoons
Porridge / Ready Brek™ made up with milk / water	5 - 8 tablespoons
Wheat biscuits (e.g. Weetabix™)*	1/2 - 1 1/2 biscuits

COUSCOUS, PASTA, POTATOES AND RICE	Range of portion sizes
Noodles (cooked)	1/2 - 1 small cup
Pasta (cooked)	 2 - 5 tablespoons in sauce 2 - 4
Baked potato	1/4 - 1/2 medium potato
boiled	 1/2 - 1 1/2 egg - sized potatoes
chips	 4 - 8 thick cut chips
croquettes	1 - 2 mini croquettes
mashed	 1 - 4 tablespoons
roast	1/2 - 1 small potato
waffles	1/2 - 1 waffle
wedges	 2 - 4 medium wedges
Rice - boiled or fried	 2 - 5 tablespoons

Food Group 2: Fruits and Vegetables

Offer at least 1 - 2 servings at each meal and also offer them with some snacks

These are low energy, high nutrient foods - allow toddlers to eat larger portions if they wish to.

FRUITS	Range of portion sizes
Apple	1/4 - 1/2 medium apple
Avocado	1/2 - 2 tablespoons
Banana	1/4 - 1 medium banana
Clementine / tangerine / mandarin	1/2 - 1 fruit
Dried apricots / prunes	1 - 4 whole fruits
Dried fruit snack bar*	1/2 - 1(15g) bar
Fruit salad	1/2 - 1 small bowl
Grapes and berries (e.g. blackberries / blueberries / raspberries / strawberries)	3 - 10 small grapes / berries
Kiwifruit / plum / apricot	1/2 - 1 fruit
Mango	1/4 - 1/2 mango
Melon	1/4 - 1 thin slice
Orange	1/4 - 1/2 orange
Peach / nectarine	1/4 - 1 whole fruit
Pear	1/4 - 3/4 whole fruit
Pineapple	1/4 - 1 medium slice
Raisins / sultanas*	1/2 - 2 tablespoons
Stewed fruit / tinned fruit / fruit puree	2 - 4 tablespoons

VEGETABLES	Range of portion sizes
Beetroot	1/2 - 2 tablespoons
Broccoli / cauliflower	1 - 4 small florets or 1/2 - 2 tablespoons
Brussels sprouts	1/2 - 3 sprouts
Cabbage	1 - 3 tablespoons
Carrot	1 - 3 tablespoons / 2 - 6 carrot sticks
Celery / cucumber / radishes / peppers / other salad vegetable	2 - 8 small sticks / slices
Cherry tomatoes	1 - 4 cherry tomatoes
Courgettes / squash / okra / aubergine	1/2 - 2 tablespoons
Green / French beans	1/2 - 2 tablespoons
Leeks / onions / shallots	1/2 - 2 tablespoons
Lettuce	1 - 2 small leaves
Mange touts	2 - 8 mange touts
Mixed vegetables	1/2 - 2 tablespoons
Mushrooms	1 - 4 button mushrooms
Parsnip	1/2 - 2 tablespoons
Peas	1/2 - 2 tablespoons
Spring greens / spinach (cooked)	1/2 - 2 tablespoons
Stir fried or roasted vegetables	1/2 - 2 tablespoons
Swede / turnip	1/2 - 2 tablespoons
Sweet corn	1/2 - 2 tablespoons
Tomato	1/4 - 1 small tomato
Vegetable soup	1/2 - 1 small bowl (60 - 125ml)

Food Group 3: Dairy

Serve about 3 times each day

An excess of these foods can reduce the appetite for iron-containing foods from the other food groups so limit serving sizes to those indicated. Milk should be given in a cup, mug or glass - not a bottle. Semi skimmed milk can be used from two years of age and skimmed milk from five years of age for children who eat a wide variety of foods.

MILK	Range of portion sizes
Cow's milk as a drink	1 cup of milk (100 - 120 ml / 3 - 4oz)
Custard	5 - 7 tablespoons
Flavoured milk (e.g. chocolate / strawberry)	1 cup of milk (100 - 120 ml / 3 - 4oz)
Milk pudding	4 - 6 tablespoons
Rice pudding	2 - 5 tablespoons

YOGURTS AND MILK PUDDINGS	Range of portion sizes
Yogurt	1 average pot (125ml)
Fromage frais	2 small pots (60g each)
Calcium enriched soya dessert	1 average pot (125ml)
Custard*	5 - 7 tablespoons
Milk pudding*	4 - 6 tablespoons
Rice pudding*	2 - 5 tablespoons

CHEESE	Range of portion sizes
Cheese sauce	1 - 4 tablespoons
Cheddar / Edam / Parmesan / Brie / Camembert / Mozzarella	in a sandwich or as a pizza topping
Grated cheese	2 - 4 tablespoons as a pizza topping or in a sandwich
Processed cheese	15 - 21g (1 slice / 1 triangle or string / 1 Mini Babybel™)
Spreadable cheese	thickly spread on a slice of bread

Food Group 4: Protein

MEAT	Range of portion sizes
Bacon	1/4 - 1 rasher
Beef	1/2 - 1 slice
Beef burger / lamb burger without bun	1/4 - 1 small burger
Chicken	1 - 2 small slices
Chicken drumsticks	1/2 - 1 drumstick
Chicken nuggets	2 - 4 small nuggets
Chicken / turkey burger without bun	1/4 - 1 small burger
Frankfurter	1/2 - 1 small frankfurter
Ham	1/2 - 1 1/2 small slices 1 1/2 - 4 wafer thin slices
Lamb	1/2 - 1 slice
Minced meat	2 - 5 tablespoons
Salami	1 - 2 slices
Sausages	1/4 - 1 medium sausage
Sausages - cocktail	1 - 3 cocktail sausages
Turkey	1 - 2 slices of breast or dark meat

FISH	Range of portion sizes
Fish: white / oily fresh fish	1/4 - 1 small fillet or 1 - 3 tablespoons
Tinned fish in a sandwich / salad (e.g. tuna / salmon / sardines)	1/2 - 1 1/2 tablespoons

EGGS	Range of portion sizes
Omelette (1 egg)	1/2 - 1 omelette
Poached / boiled / fried	1/2 - 1 egg
Scrambled egg	2 - 4 tablespoons

NUTS	Range of portion sizes
Ground, chopped or crushed nuts	1 - 2 tablespoons
Peanut butter or other nut butters	1/2 - 1 tablespoon or thinly spread on bread

PULSES	Range of portion sizes
Baked beans in tomato sauce	2 - 4 tablespoons
Falafels	1 - 3 mini falafels (25g each)
Red kidney beans / bean salad / other starchy beans	2 - 4 tablespoons
Tofu	2 - 4 tablespoons

Food Group 5: Sugars and Fats

Puddings and snacks - include up to twice a day

These foods add enjoyment to meals and snacks but as they are high energy, low nutrient foods the maximum serving size should be limited to the upper end of the range. Cake or biscuit can be served with fruit to make a nutritious pudding or snack.

PUDDINGS AND SNACKS	Range of portion sizes
chocolate coated*	1/2 - 1 biscuit
digestive (plain)*	1/2 - 1 biscuit
fruit (e.g. garibaldi)*	1 - 2 biscuits
plain (e.g rich tea / ginger nut)*	1 - 2 biscuits
sandwich (e.g. bourbon / custard cream)*	1/2 - 1 biscuit
cake - style pudding with fruit (e.g. apple sponge cake)	2 - 4 tablespoons
cake - style pudding without fruit (e.g. sticky toffee pudding)	2 - 4 tablespoons
cup cake*	1/2 - 1 (25g) cup cake
fruit cake*	1/2 - 1 slice
madeira / swiss roll / sponge*	1/4 - 1/2 slice
Cereal bar*	1/2 - 1 (20g) bar
Chocolate mousse*	1 - 3 tablespoons
Croissant (plain)	1/2 - 1 (45g) pastry
Danish / chocolate croissant*	1/4 - 1/2 medium pastry
Fruit crumble (e.g. apple or rhubarb crumble)*	2 - 4 tablespoons
Fruit sorbet / smoothie*	2 - 3 tablespoons
Ice cream*	2 - 3 heaped tablespoons
Jelly*	2 - 4 tablespoons
Muffin*	1/8 - 1/4 of a large (125g) muffin
Pancake*	1/2 - 1 small pancake
Trifle	2 - 4 tablespoons

Sauces, spreads and extras

Include 1 or 2 items at each meal to add flavour and enjoyment to the meal. The maximum serving size should be limited to the upper end of the range as these foods are high in energy or salt and an excess of high energy foods can contribute to overweight and obesity.

SAUCES, SPREADS AND EXTRAS	Range of portion sizes
Added sugar	1/2 - 1 teaspoon
Butter / margarine	thinly spread - 1 teaspoon
Canned / packet soups	1 small bowl (90 - 125 ml)
Chocolate spread	thinly spread - 1 teaspoon
Double cream	1 tablespoon
Extra butter on crispbread / crackers / vegetables / pasta	1 teaspoon
Gravy	1 - 2 tablespoons
Honey / jam / marmalade / syrup*	thinly spread - 1 teaspoon
Marmite™ / Vegemite™	thinly spread
Mayonnaise / salad cream / oil / vinegar dressing	1 - 2 teaspoons
Oil for frying - rapeseed oil is best	1 teaspoon
Sweet drinks (e.g. fruit juices / diluted squashes)	100 - 120ml / 3 - 4oz
Tomato ketchup / brown or BBQ sauce	1 - 2 teaspoons
Chocolate spread	Thinly spread – 1 teaspoon
Gravy	1-2 tablespoons
Honey/ jam / marmalade / syrup	Thinly spread – 1 teaspoon
Tomato ketchup / brown or BBQ sauce	1-2 teaspoons

High energy foods that can be offered occasionally in limited amounts

Limit these foods to occasional meals - no more than one item at one or two meals per week. Do not use as a reward, treat or to comfort a child.

CONFECTIONERY	Range of portion sizes
Bar of chocolate / chocolate - coated biscuit bar	2 - 4 squares or a funsize chocolate bar
Boiled sweets	1 - 2 sweets
Chocolate buttons*	6 - 8 small buttons
Ice lolly*	1/4 - 1/2 small ice lolly
Popcorn - sweet*	1/2 - 1 small cup
Soft Sweets (e.g. jelly tots / jelly beans)*	2 - 4 sweets
Diluted squashes	100-120ml / 3-4oz
Fruit juices	100-120ml / 3- 4oz

SAVOURY SNACKS	Range of portion sizes
Corn / Tortilla chips	4 - 6 chips
Crisps and packet snacks (e.g. Wotsits™ / Hula hoops™)	4 - 6 crisps / Wotsits™ / Hula hoops™
French fries - thin (fast food)	6 - 10 fries
Popcorn - unsweetened	1/2 - 1 small cup
Vegetable crisps	4 - 6 crisps