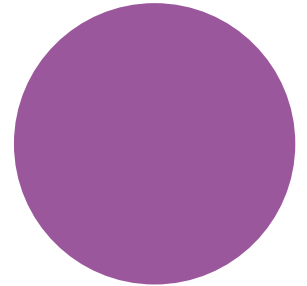
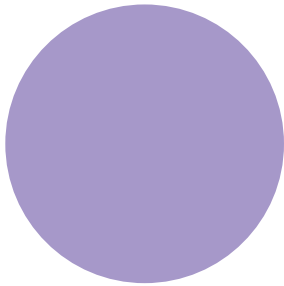
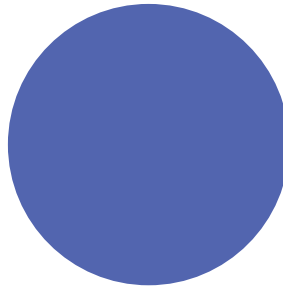
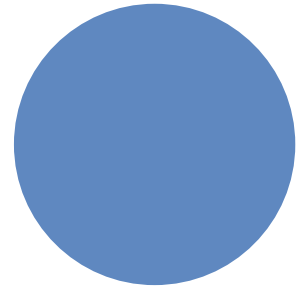
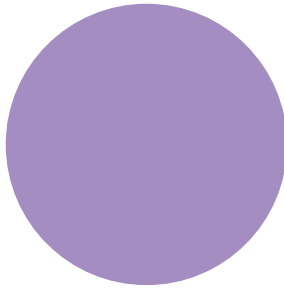


Healthy Start and Best Start Foods

A practical guide



Healthy Start and Best Start Foods – A practical guide

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This resource is provided for information only and individual advice on diet and health should always be sought from appropriate health professionals.

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About this guide

The aim of this guide is to provide support to families to help them to get the most out of the Healthy Start scheme in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, or the Best Start Foods scheme in Scotland. The guide provides a range of healthy family recipes using ingredients that can be bought through the Healthy Start or Best Start Foods schemes, and shows how these can feed the whole family.

This guide provides:

- information on the Healthy Start and Best Start Foods schemes, and what can be bought with the funds provided for additional food shopping
- recipes for family meals, with photos of appropriate portion sizes for infants, children and adults
- simple ideas for eating well on a budget, and ideas for complementary foods and finger foods for infants from 6 months of age.



As well as supporting the use of Healthy Start and Best Start Foods, this guide promotes family mealtimes by including recipes that can be prepared for all age groups. Eating with others can help children develop social skills and good eating habits from a young age and there is lots of evidence that children really benefit from sharing mealtimes in a family setting.

Health professionals can use the recipes in this guide to show practical examples of meals that include ingredients bought through

Healthy Start or Best Start Foods. Health professionals can also use the guide to promote eating well in pregnancy and the early years.

For information about the history of Healthy Start and the rationale for the food payments and vitamin supplements provided, see *Healthy Start: What happened? What next?*, available at

<https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/reports>



About Healthy Start and Best Start Foods

Healthy Start

Healthy Start is a scheme to improve the diets of pregnant women and children aged 1-4 years in low-income families in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. All pregnant women under the age of 18 years are also eligible for the scheme. Scotland has a similar scheme, called Best Start Foods. For more on this, see the next page.

Recipients of Healthy Start get a payment every four weeks that can be used to buy fresh, frozen or canned fruit, fresh, frozen or canned vegetables, fresh, dried or canned pulses, cows' milk or cows' milk-based infant formula marketed as suitable from birth.

Healthy Start payments are delivered via a prepaid card system. Any outlet which sells the appropriate foods and which takes electronic payments can accept the Healthy Start prepaid card, as registration is not necessary.

How much is the Healthy Start payment?

Who benefits?	Healthy Start payment
Pregnant woman	£4.25* per week (£17 every four weeks)
Infant 0-12 months	£8.50* per child per week (£34 per child every four weeks)
Child 1-4 years	£4.25* per child per week (£17 per child every four weeks)

* Based on 2022 values

For example, if a family has a baby aged 6 months and a toddler aged 3 years, they would be eligible to receive a payment of £51 every four weeks..

Who is eligible?

To qualify for Healthy Start, the person must be at least 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under 4 years, and be in receipt of:

- Income Support, or
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, or
- Child Tax Credit (with a family income of £16,190 or less per year), or
- Universal Credit (with a family take-home pay of £408 or less per month), or
- Pension Credit (which includes the child addition).

You also qualify if you are under 18 and pregnant, even if you don't get any of those benefits or tax credits.

Applications can be made online at www.healthystart.nhs.uk, or by emailing Healthy Start at healthy.start@nhsbsa.nhs.uk, or by calling 0300 330 7010. Recipients will receive a plastic card that can be automatically credited.

Eligible pregnant women or parents and carers of young children can apply for Healthy Start at any time, but payments will only be backdated to the date of the first application they made where they met the eligibility criteria.

For more information on who is eligible, how to apply for Healthy Start and where the Healthy Start card can be used, see www.healthystart.nhs.uk. There is also a phonenumber for queries, on 0300 330 7010.



Best Start Foods



The Healthy Start scheme applies to England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In Scotland it is devolved and is called Best Start Foods. Best Start Foods coordinates with the Best Start Grant programme.

Families eligible for Best Start Foods receive a pre-paid card which has a PIN number and can also be used contactless and online. They can use the card to buy: fresh eggs, milk (plain cow's milk and first infant formula), fruit and vegetables (fresh, frozen or tinned – those with added sugar are excluded), and pulses (e.g. peas, lentils and beans – dried, fresh, frozen or tinned). The card can be used anywhere that sells those foods and that takes electronic payments.

How much is the Best Start Foods payment?

Who benefits?	Best Start Foods payment
Pregnant woman	£4.50* per week (£18 every four weeks)
Infant 0-12 months	£9* per child per week (£36 per child every four weeks)
Child 1-3 years	£4.50* per child per week (£18 per child every four weeks)

* Based on 2022 values

For example, if a family has a baby aged 6 months and a toddler aged 2 years, they would be eligible to receive £54 every four weeks.

Who is eligible?

The scheme has wider eligibility than the Healthy Start scheme. Under-18s do not need to be on any payments or benefits to apply for Best Start Foods. Parents over 18 years can apply whether they are in work or not, as long as they are getting:

- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Pension Credit
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Universal Credit, and joint income from working is less than £660 a month, after

tax and National Insurance – Universal Credit payments are not counted as part of this

- Child Tax Credit if not getting Working Tax Credit, and joint income from working is less than £17,005 a year
- Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit if income from working is less than £7,920 a year
- Housing Benefit where income for housing benefit was calculated as being less than £328 per week.

Applications are online, and families can find more details, including how to use their Best Start Foods card online and how to manage their card, at <https://www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods/>

What do the Healthy Start and Best Start Foods schemes aim to do?

The Healthy Start and Best Start Foods payments make a contribution to household food budgets and can help families increase the amount and variety of fruits and vegetables they eat. The aim of the additional funds is to offer nutrition support to expectant mothers and young children because a good diet in pregnancy and in the first few years of life is essential for prevention of disease and to ensure children reach their full potential for growth and development.

As well as contributing to household food budgets, Healthy Start and Best Start Foods can:

- **Support breastfeeding mums:** When mums breastfeed they can use the Healthy Start or Best Start Foods payment to buy additional food to improve their own health and nutrition.
- **Support families to eat more fruit, vegetables, pulses and cows' milk (and eggs in Scotland).**
- **Support families to eat a wider range of vegetables and fruits.**
- **Support parents of babies aged 6 months to 1 year to provide healthy and cost-effective complementary foods when babies go onto solids:** The Healthy Start and Best Start Foods payments can be used to buy foods that can be used to make healthy and inexpensive complementary foods to be given to infants aged 6 months to 1 year, alongside breastmilk or infant formula.
- **Support a healthy diet with Healthy Start vitamins:** Families that are eligible for the Healthy Start or Best Start Foods payment are also eligible for free Healthy Start vitamins for women and Healthy Start children's vitamin drops (see page 15).
- **Support the safe use of infant formula:** Where mums do not breastfeed, families can use the Healthy Start or Best Start Foods payments to buy cows' milk based first infant formula in the first year of a child's life. All families should be given information on appropriate infant formula to buy and how to make these milks up safely.



Where can I use my Healthy Start card?

Any outlet which sells the appropriate foods and which also takes electronic payments can accept the Healthy Start prepaid card.

Using the Healthy Start card in markets, farmers' markets, food co-ops and community food projects

The Healthy Start prepaid card can be used in street markets, farmers' markets and in food co-ops and community food projects provided that they can accept card payments, and this can be a very good value way of spending the payment. Local food projects often offer seasonal, fresh vegetables at lower prices and they frequently offer organic or locally sourced fruit and vegetables that provide employment in local areas. Some smaller local food schemes may not currently accept card payments and local public health teams and food partnerships should consider ways to ensure that both families and food growers and producers can engage with the Healthy Start scheme.

To find out about farmer's markets in London see www.lfm.org.uk/

To find out about food co-ops in your area, see www.sustainweb.org/foodcoops/finder/


Where can I use my Best Start Foods card?

The Best Start Foods card can be used anywhere that sells the appropriate foods and that also takes electronic payments.



What can you buy with Healthy Start and Best Start Foods payments?

What can you buy with Healthy Start and Best Start Foods payments? ✓	Why is this included?	What you SHOULD NOT buy with Healthy Start and Best Start Foods payments ✗	Additional advice
FRUITS AND VEGETABLES, AND PULSES*			
<p>Plain fresh or frozen fruits or vegetables where no salt, sugar, fat or flavouring has been added.</p> <p>Canned fruits in fruit juice or water, canned vegetables in water where no salt, sugar, fat or flavouring has been added.</p> <p>Dried or canned pulses which have not had salt, sugar, fat or flavouring added.</p> <p>Fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables can be whole, chopped, packaged, loose or mixed.</p> <p>Versatile vegetables to buy include frozen peas or spinach, frozen or canned sweetcorn (in water), fresh or canned tomatoes, fresh, frozen or canned carrots (in water), onions, fresh or frozen broccoli or butternut squash. You can also buy starchy vegetables such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, yam and other starchy roots.</p> <p>Useful fruits include apples, pears, frozen mixed fruit, canned mandarins in fruit juice, bananas, fresh or canned pineapple in fruit juice, and fruit that is season in the UK.</p> <p>Dried pulses are cost-effective but may require soaking and cooking. Lentils are a useful pulse that cooks quickly. Canned pulses in water such as chickpeas, cannellini beans, red kidney beans, black-eyed peas and butter beans are useful additions to a lot of meals.</p>	<p>Fruits and vegetables are good sources of fibre, vitamins such as vitamin A, vitamin C and folic acid, and minerals such as potassium, as well as other nutrients that have been associated with good health in pregnancy and early years.</p> <p>Starchy vegetables also provide energy, fibre and other useful vitamins and minerals.</p> <p>Pulses are a good source of protein and fibre, and vitamins and minerals and are a cost-effective meat alternative or way of reducing the meat content of dishes.</p> <p>Eating lots of fruits and vegetables has been associated with less disease and may reduce the risk of heart disease, some cancers, bone disease and a range of other health conditions. Adding pulses to the diet can also support good gut health.</p>	<p>Any fresh, frozen or canned fruit, vegetables or pulses which have added salt, sugar, fat or flavouring (e.g. frozen chips, battered onion rings, fruit canned in syrup, baked beans or beans in sauce).</p> <p>Fruit juices, smoothies or puréed fruit in pouches.</p> <p>Dried fruit or dried fruit-based snacks</p> <p>Jam or fruit-based sauces</p> <p>Fruit flavoured foods such as fruit yoghurts or frozen fruit-based desserts or sorbets</p> <p>Fruit and vegetable-based baby foods in jars or pouches or marketed as snacks</p>	<p>Fruits and vegetables should make up over a third of the daily diet for everyone over 5 years.</p> <p>Adults and everyone over 5 years of age should aim to eat at least 5 portions of different fruits and vegetables a day, with each portion being at least 80g (for example, one whole medium-sized fruit such as an apple, or 3 tablespoons of vegetables).</p> <p>Children aged 1-4 years should taste at least 5 different fruits and vegetables a day. Their portions at mealtimes can be about 40g – that is, half that of an adult or older child.</p> <p>Fruits and vegetables make ideal complementary foods to introduce to infants at 6 months (see page 62).</p> <p>Replacing some meat or fish in the diet with pulses contributes to a more sustainable diet and pulses are a cost-effective source of protein and other nutrients.</p> <p>For a list of vegetables and fruit in season across the year that you can buy with Healthy Start or Best Start Foods payments, see page 75.</p>

What can you buy with Healthy Start and Best Start Foods payments? ✓	Why is this included?	What you SHOULD NOT buy with Healthy Start and Best Start Foods payments ✗	Additional advice
EGGS (Best Start Foods only)			
<p>Fresh eggs These can be any fresh eggs from hens, ducks or other birds.</p>	<p>Eggs are an excellent source of protein, vitamin A, vitamin D, some B vitamins and other minerals such as iodine. They are very versatile and cost-effective, and there is no recommended limit on how many eggs people can eat.</p>	<p>Dried or ready-prepared egg products (e.g. pre-prepared omelettes)</p>	<p>Eggs that carry the British Lion stamp or are labelled as from the 'Laid in Britain' scheme can be eaten raw or partially cooked by anyone (unless advised by a medical practitioner). Other eggs (those not Lion-stamped or not from the 'Laid in Britain' scheme, those not from the UK, or non-hen's eggs) should be cooked thoroughly until the white and yolk are solid before serving to pregnant women, infants and young children.</p>
MILK			
<p>Plain cow's milk: whole milk, semi-skimmed milk, 1% fat milk or skimmed milk.</p> <p>Milk can be pasteurised, sterilised, long-life or ultra-heat treated (UHT).</p>	<p>Milk is a good source of protein, calcium, magnesium, potassium, zinc and iodine, the B vitamin riboflavin and other vitamins such as vitamin A and vitamin B6.</p> <p>Many of the vitamins and minerals found in milk can support good bone health. Milk also provides other nutrients, such as iodine, which is essential for brain development in pregnancy</p> 	<p>Flavoured milk Coloured milk Evaporated milk Condensed milk Goats' milk Sheep's milk Soya milk alternative Oat milk alternative Nut milk alternatives Rice milk alternative Hemp milk alternative Powdered milk (unless it is infant formula – see below) Milk with anything added to it, such as milkshakes or vitamin-enriched milk</p>	<p>Pregnant women should not drink unpasteurised milk.</p> <p>Breastfeeding is the normal way for infants and young children to receive milk in the first years of life (see page 74 for sources of advice on breastfeeding). Otherwise an appropriate infant formula should be used (see page 73 for information on appropriate formula).</p> <p>Whole milk (full-fat milk) is suitable as a main drink for most children from 12 months of age. Semi-skimmed milk can be introduced after the age of 2 years if children eat well.</p> <p>Skimmed milk is not suitable as the main milk drink for children under 5 years of age.</p> <p>Adults can have semi-skimmed or 1% fat milk or skimmed milk. These milks contain comparable nutrients to whole milk but less fat and saturated fat.</p>
INFANT FORMULA			
<p>Cows' milk based infant formula suitable from birth.</p>	<p>For infants who are not being breastfed, first infant formula can provide the nutrients necessary for proper growth and development. These can be called first infant milk or stage 1 milk and will be suitable from birth. Infant formula can never replicate breastmilk as it does not contain protective factors passed on by the mother, but it is the only alternative recommended in the first year of life.</p>	<p>Any other type of infant formula, follow-on formula, toddler milk or growing-up milk.</p>	<p>Where mums do not breastfeed, it is important that they receive independent advice on infant formula milks. For more on infant milks see page 73.</p>

What could I buy with my Healthy Start food payment?

The Healthy Start food payment can be spent on liquid cows' milk, fresh, frozen or canned fruit and vegetables, fresh, dried or canned pulses, and fresh potatoes. Below are some examples of what the payments might be used for.

Kate, is mum to Alex who is 9 months old, and she receives a payment of **£34** every four weeks (equivalent to **£8.50** a week). She budgets well and tries to spend no more than **£8.50** of this at each weekly shop. Kate is still breastfeeding Alex as well as giving him three healthy meals a day. In a typical week she uses her food payment to buy:

4.5 litres (8 pints) of semi-skimmed milk, so she can have a large glass of milk a day herself, and use milk in cooking **£2.30**

A bag of seasonal fruit such as apples or pears **95p**

600g easy peeler oranges **£1.30**

1 lemon **30p**

1 can of chickpeas in water **55p**

300g mushrooms **95p**

900g bag frozen sweetcorn **80p**

2.5kg fresh potatoes **£1.15**

500g carrots **20p**

**Total
£8.50**

Ayesha is mum to Lola who is 2 years old. She gets a Healthy Start payment of **£17** every four weeks (worth **£4.25** a week). She spends this at her local fruit and vegetable market, where she can usually buy:

1kg sweet potatoes **£1**

500g onions **35p**

A large cauliflower **£1**

A large mango **80p**

500g tomatoes **95p**

**Total
£4.10**

Ayesha can keep any unspent funds on her card for the following week.

Nia and Brian are parents to Ruby, 14 months, and Mason, 3 years. They usually spend their Healthy Start payment of **£34** every four weeks (equivalent to **£8.50** a week, **£4.25** for each child) at the supermarket, where they buy:

4 pints (2.27 litres) of whole milk **£1.15**

2.5kg fresh potatoes **£1.15**

1kg fresh bananas **78p**

A pack of 5 oranges **60p**

500g frozen berries **£2.20**

1 red cabbage **59p**

1 head of broccoli **52p**

2 x 250g bags of cherry tomatoes **96p**

900g bag frozen garden peas **55p**

**Total
£8.50**

Sadie is 7 months pregnant with her first baby and gets a Healthy Start payment of **£17** every four weeks. She tries to spend about **£4.25** of this each week. She usually spends this on milk, fruit and vegetables so that she can make herself a fruit milkshake in the morning and vegetable sticks for her packed lunch. For example, she can buy:

4 pints (2.27 litres) 1% fat milk **£1.15**

500g frozen fruit or berries **£2.20**

350g bananas **28p**

1 cucumber **49p**

350g carrots **14p**

**Total
£4.26**

Adam and Priti are parents to Rishi who is 10 months old, and Anika who is 3 years old. They receive a Healthy Start payment of **£51** for the two children every four weeks, but use the payments fortnightly when they do a big supermarket shop. Rishi is partially breastfed and has about two drinks of infant formula a day, so in their fortnightly shop (where they have **£25.50** of their Healthy Start payment to spend), they buy:

A tin of first infant formula £9*	2 aubergines £1.38
8 pints of whole milk £2.30	500g dried yellow split peas 55p
A pineapple 85p	1kg dried red split lentils £1.80
4 large kiwi fruit £1.40	500g spinach £1.77
A pack of 6 apples 95p	2kg red onions £1.50
425g can mango slices in juice £1.10	2 mixed packs of sweet peppers (6 peppers) £2
1 cauliflower 85p	

**Total
£25.45**

* The cost of first infant formula varies by brand. To find out about the costs of all infant formula on the UK market, see the website www.infantmilkinf.org

Jen is 5 months pregnant and lives with her partner Jo and their older child Kim who is nearly 3 years old. Every four weeks they receive a **£34** Healthy Start payment (equivalent to £8.50 a week). They spend **£8.50** a week on:

A pack of 6 apples 95p
600g satsumas £1.35
A butternut squash £1.20
500g leeks £1
1kg onions 49p
2 x 250g punnets of cherry tomatoes 96p
300g can sliced carrots in water 35p
2 x 400g cans kidney beans in water £1.20
850g frozen sliced green beans £1

**Total
£8.50**

Hannah is mum to twins Cassidy and Harrison who are 7 months old. The twins are formula-fed. Hannah receives a **£68** Healthy Start payment every four weeks, equivalent to **£17** a week. She currently needs to buy two tins of infant formula a week and buys an own-brand formula that costs £8.49 a tin. So she can just about afford to buy two tins each week (£16.98) with her Healthy Start payment.

If families choose to spend their food payments on infant formula, how can they be supported to do this safely?

All infant formula marketed in the UK must meet the same compositional requirements, and there is no benefit in choosing a more expensive product over a cheaper one. You can find out more about the different types of infant formula on the UK market, their ingredients and their costs at www.infantmilkinf.org

Powdered infant formula is not sterile and it is important that families know how to make up and store milks safely. Information can be accessed at <https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/bottle-feeding-resources/guide-to-bottle-feeding/>

What could I buy with my Best Start Foods payment?

Shona is 15 weeks pregnant with her first baby. She receives a Best Start Foods payment of **£18** every four weeks. She spends about **£4.50** of this each week in a large local supermarket on:

6 large free-range eggs **£1.20**
4 pints of semi-skimmed milk **£1.15**
A tin of chickpeas **40p**
2 tins of chopped tomatoes **56p**
1kg carrots **40p**
4 baking potatoes **66p**

Shona can keep unspent funds on her card for next week.

Total
£4.37

Alison and **Mo** have two children: Archie aged 13 months and Mo junior who is two and a half years old. They spend their **£36** Best Start Foods payment at a local farm shop, where they spend about **£9** each week on:

A box of seasonal vegetables put together by the farm shop **£7.50**
6 free-range eggs **£1**
250g button mushrooms **50p**

Total
£9

Alisha is pregnant with her first baby and lives with her sister Chloe and her sister's 2-year-old son Joshua. They have limited food storage and cooking facilities where they live, and they don't have transport to a large supermarket. Between them they get **£36** in Best Start Foods payments every four weeks. They spend about **£9** of this each week on frequent visits to a small shop near where they live:

4 x 2 pints semi-skimmed milk
at £1.15 x 4 **£4.60**
6 eggs **£1.60**
Can mixed vegetables in water **79p**
Can of peas and carrots in water **65p**
Large can of fruit cocktail in juice **£1.45**

Total
£9.09

Buying value fruit and vegetables

Many supermarkets have own-brand value ranges of fruit and vegetables, or may sell packs of slightly wonky fruit and vegetables. 'Imperfect' fruits and vegetables are nutritionally the same as those standardly sold and are a cost-effective choice for those on a budget. For example, Tesco sells carrots for 40p a kilo, but 'imperfect' carrots for 29p a kilo; potatoes for 56p a kilo, but 'imperfect' potatoes for 36p a kilo.

Vitamins

The Healthy Start scheme provides families with free vitamins for eligible women when they are pregnant and when they have a baby under 1 year of age, and for children up to 4 years. In Scotland *all* pregnant women can get free Healthy Start vitamins and *all* breastfeeding women, infants and children up to 3 years can get free vitamin D. For those eligible for Best Start Foods, free Healthy Start vitamins are provided for children aged up to 4 years.

Healthy Start vitamins for women

These contain:

Folic acid 400 micrograms	Reduces the chance of the baby having spina bifida, a birth defect where the spine doesn't form properly, and a type of anaemia in later pregnancy.
Vitamin C 70 mg	Helps maintain healthy tissue in the body.
Vitamin D 10 micrograms	Helps the body to absorb calcium and so supports mum's bone health, as well as helping the baby's bones to develop properly.

Healthy Start children's vitamin drops

These contain:

Vitamin A 233 micrograms	For growth, vision in dim light and healthy skin.
Vitamin C 20 mg	Helps maintain healthy tissue in the body.
Vitamin D 10 micrograms	For strong bones and teeth.

Healthy Start vitamins are suitable for vegetarians and halal diets, and free from milk, egg, gluten, soya and peanut residues.

Pregnant women

It is currently recommended that all women take folic acid as soon as they start to try for a baby, or as soon as they think they might be pregnant, and vitamin D as soon as they think they are pregnant.

Healthy Start vitamins for pregnant women contain the right amount of folic acid and vitamin D that are recommended during pregnancy. However, pregnant women cannot apply for Healthy Start until they are 10 weeks pregnant and should therefore be encouraged to take folic acid from when they plan a pregnancy, or as soon as they find out they are pregnant.

- If a pregnant woman takes any other supplement, she should check with a midwife or GP that it is safe to take it.
- If women have been prescribed iron supplements, they can take these alongside Healthy Start vitamins.

New mums

- New mums should take Healthy Start vitamins, both to support their own nutritional status (which is particularly important if they plan another pregnancy in the next two years), and to ensure that they have sufficient vitamin D to protect their own bone health, and to replenish stores used up during pregnancy and /or breastfeeding.

Children

It is recommended that breastfed babies are given 8.5 -10 micrograms of vitamin D a day from birth. The Healthy Start vitamin supplement for infants and young children currently contains vitamins A and C, and 10 micrograms of vitamin D. Formula-fed or mixed-fed infants should have vitamin drops when they have less than 500ml formula a day. In some areas, Healthy Start children's drops are available to all families regardless of whether they are registered with the scheme. And in some areas they are provided universally in pregnancy, but not postnatally.

It is particularly important to encourage mums who are breastfeeding to take vitamin D, and for them to give a supplement to their babies if they did not take vitamin D in pregnancy and are considered at risk of low vitamin status (for example, because of lack of sun exposure), or if mum's vitamin D status has been measured and found to be low.

All children up to their 5th birthday should be given children's vitamin drops as a nutritional safety net. Healthy Start vitamins are provided free to eligible families throughout the UK up to a child's 4th birthday.

How to get the Healthy Start vitamins

Families will need to show their Healthy Start card to collect their vitamins. Vitamins should be available from health visitors, some children's centres or family centres, and also in some pharmacies.

In England and Wales, vitamins are available from children's centres or family centres, and also in some pharmacies. Health visitors can advise how they can be accessed in their area. In England you can find where to access Healthy Start vitamins by entering your postcode here:

www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/healthy-start-vitamins/locationsearch/348

In Wales they can be collected at the local health board.

In Northern Ireland the NHS will send a letter to eligible families who have a Healthy Start card, explaining how to request the vitamins. The NHS will check the letter and forward it to the Business Services Organisation, who will post the vitamins directly.

In Scotland – where Healthy Start vitamins are provided free to all pregnant women and children up to the age of 4 years, and vitamin D is free to all breastfeeding women, infants and children up to the age of 3 years – families are advised to ask their midwife, family nurse or health visitor where to access vitamins.



About the recipes in this guide

Planning to cook family meals from scratch can help families eat well and keep food costs down. All the recipes in this guide are designed for busy families. The recipes are cost-effective, healthy and delicious. And families don't need lots of equipment or lots of cooking experience to make them.

Each recipe in this guide has photos of portion sizes for adults and for children of different ages, and a guide price for each recipe. We have made all the recipes in this guide to check they work and taste good.

Need to brush-up on your cooking skills?

Contact your local council to find out if there is a community cooking class you could go to. This might be at a local college or community centre, for example.

Ask at the nearest children's centre, or check with your midwife or health visitor for details of local cooking groups for families.

Lots of schools also offer cooking classes. Check out www.letsgetcooking.org.uk for more information.

Portion sizes

Families come in all different sizes. Each recipe in this guide makes enough for four adult portions, but you can make half the amount, or twice the amount, depending on the size of your family. For example:

- If there is one adult and two children under 5 in your family, each recipe will make enough for two meals. Or you can halve the recipe to make just one meal for you all.
- If there are two adults and two teenagers, each recipe will make enough for one meal for you all.
- If there are four adults, two teenagers and three primary school aged children in a family, the recipe can be doubled to feed everyone at one meal.

The photos with each recipe indicate what an appropriate portion size looks like for children of different ages, so you can judge how to make sure everyone gets what they

need. These portion sizes are just estimates and children will have different sized appetites depending on how active they are, and how much they are growing. Boys need to eat a bit more than girls as they are generally heavier and have more muscle mass, and teenage boys will frequently need to eat bigger portions than adult men as they are growing rapidly. Pregnant women don't need to eat more than usual, except in the last three months of their pregnancy. Breastfeeding mums need a little bit of extra energy every day. A detailed summary of how energy needs vary by age and gender, and during pregnancy, can be found on page 71.

We have used different sized and coloured plates to indicate what appropriate portions look like for different family members. See the next page for scale photos of the plates used. We have simplified the different portion sizes to give four different examples per recipe.

Plates used in the photos

Next to each recipe are photos of four plates:



Yellow plate
25cm
Average portion for
an **adult, or teenager**
aged **12-18 years**



Green plate
25cm
Average portion for a
5-11 year old



Blue plate
20cm
Average portion
for a
1-4 year old



Red bowl
13cm
Average portion
for a
7-12 month old

Price guide

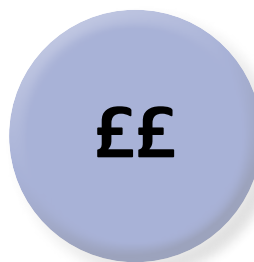
For the 2020 edition of this resource we estimated the price of foods using data from www.mysupermarket.co.uk and from supermarket receipts. We used value range and supermarket brand products where possible – always choosing the best value items (but not including special offers and ‘buy one get one free’ offers). For the current edition, we checked a wide range of these recipes against supermarket website prices in April 2022 to ensure that price categories remained unchanged.

At the top of each recipe page there is a circle with either one, two or three £ symbols, to show how much it costs to make the recipe:



Cost to make
4 adult portions =
Less than £2

= less than 50p per portion



Cost to make
4 adult portions =
£2 to £3.50

= 50p to 90p per portion



Cost to make
4 adult portions =
£3.50 to £5

= 90p to £1.25 per portion

Equipment

The recipes in this guide do not require a lot of equipment. Many of them are one-pot meals that simply require a knife and chopping board, a spoon and a medium saucepan. It is worth investing in these simple pieces of cookery equipment as you will save lots of money if you can cook your own food rather than relying on ready-prepared foods.

Tips for keeping food shopping costs down

- **Cook from scratch.** Making meals from scratch is cheaper and healthier than buying ready-made meals, which also often have a lot of unnecessary sugar, salt and preservatives added. Remember that food manufacturers and retailers are making a profit on even the cheapest ready meals.
- **Buy own-brand goods.** The quality is generally the same as popular brands. The only real difference is the price.
- **Buy saver versions of some food items.** Saver canned vegetables – like canned tomatoes or beans, saver frozen vegetables, dried pasta and rice, saver cheese or yoghurt – are often good choices. Avoid saver versions of meat products like sausages or burgers, as these are likely to be low in meat content and high in fat and salt.
- **Keep food fresh.** Store fresh vegetables in the fridge if possible. They will last longer and you will throw less away.
- **Cut down the amount of meat bought.** Use less meat in dishes by adding more vegetables, as well as peas, beans, lentils and other pulses such as chickpeas or red kidney beans, to add extra protein.
- **Get the best deals on fruit and veg.** Find out if there is a food co-op or a fruit and veg scheme in your area that accepts Healthy Start or Best Start Foods payments. These types of projects often sell quality fruit and vegetables at a lower price to help people in their communities access affordable fresh food.
- **Stick to the list!** Shopping costs can get out of control quickly if you don't have a plan or shopping list. If you plan your meals across the week, you won't buy food that gets wasted.
- **Compare prices and know how much you can spend.** There are lots of websites where you can compare the cost of food at different supermarkets.
- **Beware of offers.** Only buy offers such as 'buy one get one free' if you are certain you will eat both or are able to share the extra one with a friend.
- **Choose your fruit and vegetables carefully.** Don't buy fruit and vegetables that are overly ripe unless you are sure that you will use them quickly.
- **Buy frozen fruits and vegetables if you have a freezer or will use them on the day you buy them.** It's often cheaper to buy frozen fruits and vegetables. They contain the same minerals and nutrients as fresh ones, need no preparation and, if you can store them, they are often the cheapest way of adding vegetables to dishes.
- **Avoid pre-cut, pre-peeled and packaged vegetables and fruits.** They are more expensive than buying loose fruits and vegetables and lose nutrients as soon as they are opened.

Eating sustainable food

Sustainable food choices and low-cost food choices have a lot in common, as often the cheaper option is also more sustainable. Eating more sustainable food is an important aspect of providing better food for all. The food we eat not only has an impact on our health, but also on the health of the planet. For example, buying loose fruits and vegetables instead of pre-packaged is more sustainable as there is less packaging, and it is also generally the cheaper option.

So, as well as having a positive effect on your family's health by buying more fruits, vegetables, milk and pulses (and eggs in Scotland), you can also have a positive impact on the health of the planet by making smart, low-cost, sustainable choices. Four simple ways of eating a more sustainable diet are to:

- Eat seasonal foods where possible (see the *Buying fruit and vegetables in season* on page 75).
- Reduce food and packaging waste.
- Try to cook from scratch where possible.
- Reduce the amount of meat and meat products consumed.

For more information on sustainable diets, see www.sustainweb.org.

Good hygiene and food safety

- Always wash your hands with soap and water before preparing food or helping children to eat, and after changing nappies, toileting children, blowing your nose or sneezing into a tissue, or playing with pets.
- Children's hands should always be washed with soap and water before meals and snacks, and after going to the toilet.
- Never leave children under 5 years of age alone while they are eating in case they choke. If children are in a high chair, always strap them in.

The most important things to remember when preparing, cooking or storing foods are:

- All fruit and vegetables to be eaten uncooked need to be washed thoroughly.
- Follow instructions on food to store it safely and always eat foods before the 'best before' date.
- Always keep cooked meat and raw meat apart and make sure they are well covered and cannot cross-contaminate each other.
- Cook foods such as pork, burgers, sausages, kebabs and poultry such as chicken and turkey thoroughly before eating.
- If previously cooked foods are re-heated, make sure they are heated to piping hot in the middle.

For more information on food safety, see www.food.gov.uk

Recipes

General tips for using the recipes in this guide to feed the family

- **Salt and other flavourings**

If you're using the same recipe to feed all the family, including children under 5 years and infants, make sure that salt or any other seasonings such as soy sauce, stock powder, chilli sauce, jerk seasoning or other flavouring powders and sauces are added to the dish **after** a portion has been taken out for the younger family members, as babies and small children have immature kidneys that can't cope with added salt.

- **Bouillon powder**

We use bouillon powder in recipes to add both salt and vegetable stock flavour. You can also use low-salt stock cubes. Bouillon powder can be bought in tubs and a tub will last a long time as it is used sparingly. You can also get vegetarian and vegan versions of bouillon if you are serving people who avoid animal products. 1 teaspoon of bouillon powder contains the same amount of salt as half a teaspoon of salt. Use half a teaspoon of salt in place of 1 teaspoon of bouillon powder, or use none at all if you are happy with a lower salt taste. **If you are serving infants or young children do not add bouillon powder or salt until you have taken out a portion for them.**

- **Herbs**

We suggest using dried mixed herbs in some of the savoury recipes, as they add flavour and colour to a range of dishes. They are cheap to buy and they store well, so you don't need to buy them very often. If you have fresh herbs growing in a window box or in the garden, use those instead. 1 tablespoon of freshly chopped herbs is equivalent to 1 teaspoon of dried herbs.

- **Garlic**

Some of the recipes suggest using garlic paste or a crushed clove of fresh garlic. You can buy crushed garlic in tubes or tubs and this will have a long shelf-life and might be easier to manage than fresh garlic which needs to be bought regularly. Fresh garlic needs to be peeled and then chopped finely, or pushed through a garlic crusher if you have one, or smashed with the back of a wooden spoon.

- **Fish**

If you're using fresh or frozen fish, make sure all the bones have been removed before serving, especially if you're serving young children or older relatives or friends.

- **Eggs**

Eggs that carry the British Lion stamp or are labelled as being from the 'Laid in Britain' scheme, can be eaten raw or partially cooked by anyone (unless otherwise advised by a medical practitioner). Other eggs (those not Lion-stamped, or not from the 'Laid in Britain' scheme, those not from the UK, or non-hen's eggs) should be cooked thoroughly until the white and yolk are solid before serving to pregnant women, infants, young children or older people.

Soups

A warm bowl of soup with bread can be a tasty, hearty meal for everyone in the family. Soup is a great way of getting lots of vegetables into one meal and for using up vegetables that may be reaching the end of their life, but you can also make soups easily from store cupboard ingredients. Soups can be made smooth or chunky and, depending on the other ingredients, can have milk or water added as liquid.

Some example soup recipes are shown on the following pages. These show the amount of soup and bread that provide enough energy (calories) for a main meal for different age groups.

We give some more ideas for soups below. You could also find a book of soup recipes in your local library, or search the internet for cheap and easy soup recipes. Or look at the combinations of ingredients that are used in supermarket soups and then recreate your own at home.

Basic recipe for making a vegetable soup

1. Heat a small amount of oil in a saucepan and add some chopped onion. Fry for 1 minute.
2. Add the chopped vegetables, potatoes, beans or other ingredients that are being used and fry for another 2 minutes.
3. Add vegetable stock or water and simmer for 10 minutes.
4. Either serve as it is, or mash, sieve or liquidise the soup.

To make the texture of a soup smooth:

- use a potato masher once all the cooked ingredients are soft, or
- pass the soup through a sieve, or
- use a hand-held blender or food processor if you have one.

You can add milk to some soups to make them 'cream of'. And you can flavour soups with lots of different herbs or spices.

Ideas for soups

Black-eyed bean and vegetable
Butternut squash and carrot
Callaloo with coconut
Carrot and coriander
Carrot and orange
Chickpea and spinach
Cream of celeriac
Cream of celery
French onion soup
Green pea, lettuce and mint
Lentil and tomato with cumin
Mushroom and butter bean with parsley
Pumpkin
Spinach and potato
Split pea and leek
Sweet potato chowder
Tomato and summer vegetables

Chicken and sweetcorn soup

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 medium onion, peeled and diced
- 1 level teaspoon bouillon powder
- 1 medium potato, washed and diced (skin can be left on)
- 200g cooked chicken, diced
- 200g frozen sweetcorn
- 1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs or 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, finely chopped
- 500ml water
- 500ml semi-skimmed milk

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Heat the oil in a large pan and fry the diced onion with the bouillon powder for a few minutes, stirring all the time, until it softens.
2. Add all the other ingredients except the milk, bring to the boil, and simmer for about 15 to 20 minutes.
3. Add the milk and re-heat.

For babies

If serving this soup to a baby:

- don't add the bouillon powder until after you have taken out the baby's portion
- chop the meat finely, and
- allow the soup to cool before serving.

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



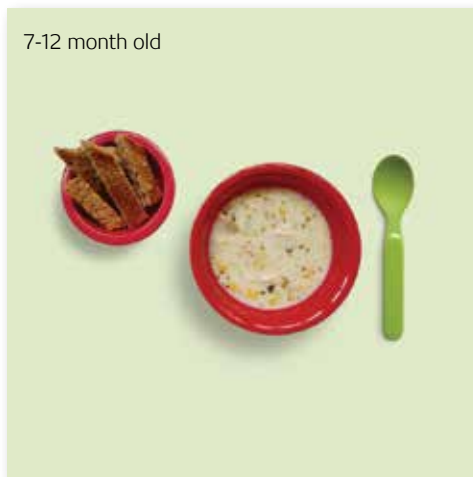
5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



££

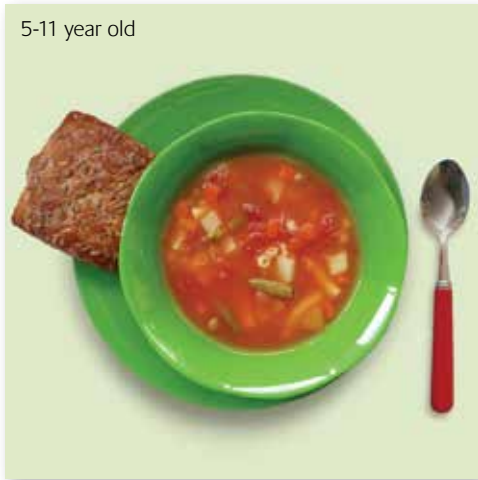
Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 50p to 90p
per portion

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= less than 50p
per portion

Easy minestrone soup

- 50g small pasta pieces or pasta for soup
- 500g carton of passata or 1 large can (400g) chopped tomatoes
- 350g frozen mixed vegetables
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon bouillon powder
- 1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs or 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, finely chopped
- 800ml water

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Add all the ingredients to a large pan.
2. Bring to the boil stirring occasionally so the pasta doesn't stick to the bottom.
3. Turn the heat down and simmer for about 15 to 20 minutes until the pasta is cooked.
4. Stir well before serving.

For babies

If serving this soup to a baby:

- don't add the bouillon powder until after you have taken out the baby's portion
- make sure the vegetables and pasta are finely chopped, and
- allow the soup to cool before serving.

Freezing soup

- Soup is ideal for freezing. Once it has cooled down to room temperature, pop it into a plastic box or freezer bag, make sure it is securely fastened and keep it in the freezer until you need it. Having a home-made meal you have put in the freezer is the same as having a frozen ready meal – but without the high cost or added salt, fat and sugar!

Leek, potato and pea soup

- 1½ tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2-3 large leeks, washed and sliced (about 250g prepared weight)
- 2 large potatoes, washed and diced, skin on (about 400g prepared weight)
- 400ml water
- 1 teaspoon bouillon powder
- 1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs or 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, finely chopped
- 600ml semi-skimmed milk
- 200g frozen peas

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Heat the oil in a large pan, add the leeks and potatoes, and cook for about 5 minutes.
2. Add the water, bouillon powder and herbs and simmer until the vegetables are soft.
3. Add the milk and peas and heat through until the peas are cooked.
4. Sieve, mash or blend the soup (or leave it as it is).

For babies

If serving this soup to a baby:

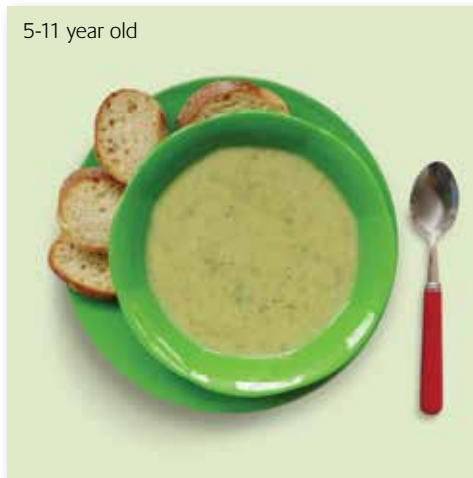
- don't add the bouillon powder until after you have taken out the baby's portion, and
- allow the soup to cool before serving.

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



£

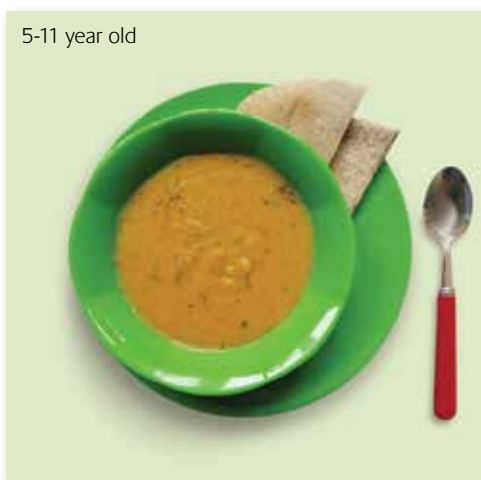
Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= less than 50p
per portion

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= less than 50p
per portion

Lentil and carrot soup

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon garlic paste or 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon bouillon powder
- 3-4 large carrots, peeled and diced (about 350g prepared weight)
- 165g dried red lentils
- 1 litre water (1,000ml)

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Heat the oil in a large pan, add the garlic, bouillon powder and carrots, and fry gently, stirring regularly, for 5 minutes.
2. Add the lentils and water and bring to the boil, stirring occasionally.
3. Simmer for about 20 minutes until the lentils are soft.
4. Either serve the soup as it is, with chunks, or mash, sieve or blend to make a smooth soup or if serving it to a baby.

For babies

If serving this soup to a baby:

- don't add the bouillon powder until after you have taken out the baby's portion
- allow the soup to cool before serving.

Tip

- Instead of carrots you could also make this soup with sweet potato, parsnip, butternut squash or a combination of root vegetables.

Jacket potatoes

Jacket potatoes with fillings make a quick, tasty and nutritious meal.

Cooking jacket potatoes

There are different ways of cooking jacket potatoes. You can cook them in a microwave oven, a regular oven or a combination of the two.

- To cook in a microwave oven, prick the potatoes with a fork and microwave each one for 6 to 8 minutes or until tender. If you cook four large potatoes at one time, the cooking time will be four times as long (so about half an hour). Microwave ovens use less heat and energy than conventional ovens.
- To cook in an oven, prick the potatoes with a fork and place in a hot oven for 40 minutes or until tender. Cooking in the oven is the most expensive method of cooking.
- If you want to crisp the potato skin without using the energy it takes to cook in the oven, cook for 5 minutes in the microwave and finish off in a hot oven for 10 minutes.

The recipes on pages 28-31 are designed for 4 large jacket potatoes or for a combination of large and small jacket potatoes, depending on who the meal is for. You can either cut large potatoes in half or quarters or bake smaller potatoes as needed.

We based our recipes on potato weights of:

- Adults and teenagers – 250g
- Children 5-11 years – 180g
- Children 1-4 years – 100g
- Infants 7-12 months – 60g

Encourage everyone to eat the potato and its skin, as the skin is high in fibre and other nutrients. Chop the skin well before serving it to a baby.

There is no need to add butter or fat spread to the potato if you are using a moist or soft filling.

Some example fillings are given on the following pages and there are more ideas opposite. Many of the pasta sauces or pie fillings in this book would make useful jacket potato fillings too (see pages 47 and 32).

Ideas for fillings for jacket potatoes

- Baked beans
- Baked beans with a few drops of chilli sauce
- Chilli con carne
- Cottage cheese with chopped pineapple
- Grated cheese and chopped fresh tomato
- Canned mixed bean salad
- Houmous and green leaves
- Low-fat soft cheese with apple chunks
- Mashed tuna with kidney beans and salsa
- Mozzarella, chopped tomato and basil
- Plain yoghurt mixed with coriander, chopped cucumber and spring onion
- Roasted peppers
- Scrambled egg with chopped tomatoes and red pepper
- Tomato salsa with olives and feta cheese
- Tuna and sweetcorn mayonnaise

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



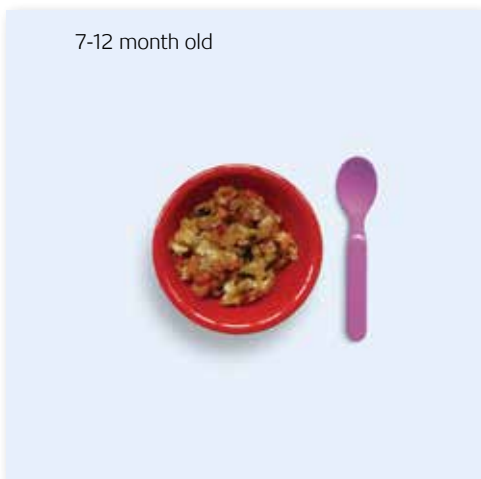
5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



£££

Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 90p to £1.25
per portion

Jacket potato with beef stir-fry

4 large jacket potatoes (or equivalent),
cooked (see page 27 for how to cook
them)

For the filling:

- 1½ tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, peeled and sliced
- 200g lean beef, cut into strips
- 1 large carrot, peeled and sliced into thin sticks
- 1 large courgette, washed, topped and tailed and sliced into thin sticks
- 1 red pepper, cored and seeds removed and cut into slices
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Heat the oil in a large pan, add the sliced onion and beef strips and fry, stirring all the time, until the meat is browned.
2. Add the carrot, courgette and red pepper and stir-fry over a high heat until the vegetables are softening and the meat is cooked.
3. Add the soy sauce and mix well (if serving to babies and children under 5, don't add any soy sauce to their portion), and serve over the cooked jacket potatoes.

For babies

If serving this to a baby:

- chop the meat finely
- mash the potato and filling together, and
- allow to cool before serving.

Jacket potato with scrambled egg and spinach

4 large jacket potatoes (or equivalent), cooked (see page 27 for how to cook them)

For the filling:

25g vegetable fat spread

250g frozen spinach

5 large eggs, beaten

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Melt the fat spread in a pan, add the frozen spinach and cook until defrosted and softened.
2. Add the beaten eggs and cook, stirring constantly, until the eggs and spinach are mixed and the egg is cooked.
3. Serve immediately on the cooked jacket potatoes.

For babies

If serving this meal to a baby:

- mash the potato and filling together, and
- allow to cool before serving.

Tip

- It is always a good idea to serve some extra vegetables with dishes and carrots provide a good colour contrast.

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



£

Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= less than 50p
per portion

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



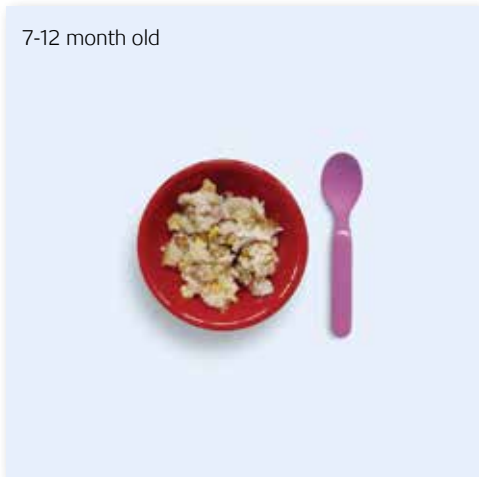
5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 50p to 90p
per portion

Jacket potato with tuna, sweetcorn and soft cheese

4 large jacket potatoes (or equivalent), cooked (see page 27 for how to cook them)

For the filling:

200g frozen sweetcorn, or sweetcorn canned in water

1 can tuna fish in brine, drained (drained weight 130g)

200g low-fat soft cheese

3 or 4 spring onions, diced

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Place the sweetcorn in boiling water, bring to the boil, and then drain and rinse.
2. Mix all the ingredients together in a bowl and serve immediately over hot cooked jacket potatoes.

For babies

If serving this meal to a baby:

- mash the potato and filling together, and
- allow to cool before serving.

Jacket potato with vegetable chilli

4 large jacket potatoes (or equivalent), cooked (see page 27 for how to cook them)

For the filling:

- 1½ tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, peeled and diced
- 1 teaspoon bouillon powder
- 1 red pepper, de-seeded and diced
- 2 large tomatoes, diced
- 1 large can (400g) red kidney beans (use the beans and the water they are in)
- 1 teaspoon chilli powder
- 1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Heat the oil in a large pan, add the diced onions and bouillon powder and fry, stirring all the time, until the onions soften.
2. Add all the other ingredients and simmer gently, stirring regularly, for about 10 minutes until all the vegetables are soft.
3. Serve over cooked jacket potatoes.

For babies

If serving this meal to a baby:

- don't add the bouillon powder until after you have taken out the baby's portion
- mash the filling well and then mix the potato and filling together, and
- allow to cool before serving.

Tip

- Canned tomatoes can be used instead of fresh tomatoes.

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



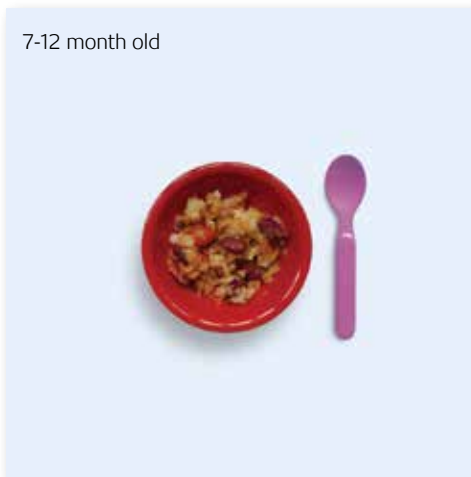
5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



£

Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= less than 50p
per portion

Potato-topped pies

Savoury pies are a family favourite in homes across the UK. Using mashed potato instead of pastry is much healthier and quicker, and you can buy potatoes with your Healthy Start or Best Start Foods payment. For even more nutritional benefits and to save time and money, keep the skins on the potato.

We give four recipes for potato-topped pies on the following pages. Below is the recipe for making the mashed potato for them.

Mashed potato pie top

1. Bring a saucepan of water to the boil.
2. Peel the potatoes and cut into cubes. Or just wash the whole potatoes and cut them into cubes.
3. Add the potato pieces to the boiling water and cook for about 10 to 15 minutes or until the potato is tender.
4. Drain the potatoes well.
5. Add about a tablespoon of milk for each person you are serving, and mash to make a chunky or smooth potato depending on how your family likes it.

Ideas for flavouring the mashed potato pie tops

You can make mashed potato pie tops more interesting by adding extra flavours to the mashed potato – for example, garlic, chopped herbs or dried mixed herbs, mustard, horse radish, chives or paprika.

Ideas for fillings

You can top all sorts of pies with mashed potato. Traditionally people use potato as a topping for shepherd's pie (made with lamb), shepherdess pie (made with vegetables), cottage pie (made with beef) or fish pie (made with any white or oily fish), but you can make up all sorts of filling combinations. Some recipes for potato-topped pies are given on the next pages.

Chicken and mushroom pie

- 1.4kg (1,400g) potatoes, washed and diced, or peeled and diced
- 100ml semi-skimmed milk
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, peeled and diced
- 250g mushrooms, diced
- 300g cooked chicken, cut into dice or chunks
- 20g cornflour
- 2 tablespoons water
- 200g low-fat soft cheese

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Boil the potatoes in water for about 15 minutes until tender. Drain well. Add the semi-skimmed milk and mash to a desired consistency.
2. In a large pan, heat the vegetable oil and fry the diced onion for several minutes to soften.
3. Add the diced mushrooms and chicken and cook for 5 minutes to soften the mushrooms.
4. Blend the cornflour with 2 tablespoons of water to make a smooth paste and add to the mixture, stirring. Bring to the boil and cook for a few minutes to thicken the mixture. Add the soft cheese and stir well.
5. Place the chicken and mushroom filling into an ovenproof dish and top with the mashed potato. If the potato and filling are both still hot, just grill the top of the pie before serving. Otherwise heat the pie through in a hot oven (180°C /350°F/ Gas 4) for about 10 to 15 minutes.

For babies

- If serving this pie to a baby, chop the chicken finely, mash the pie well, and cool before serving.

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



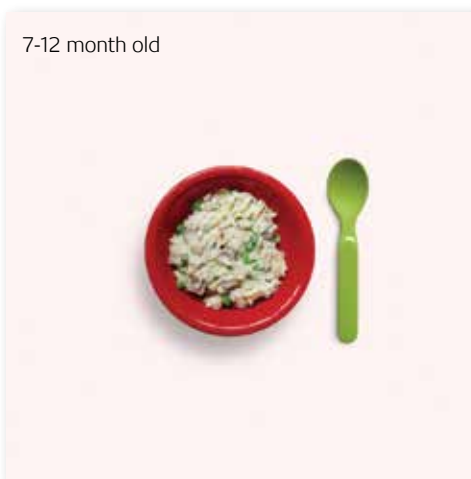
5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old

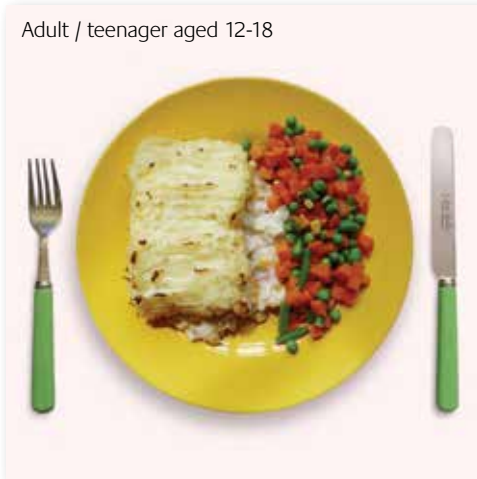


£££

Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 90p to £1.25
per portion

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



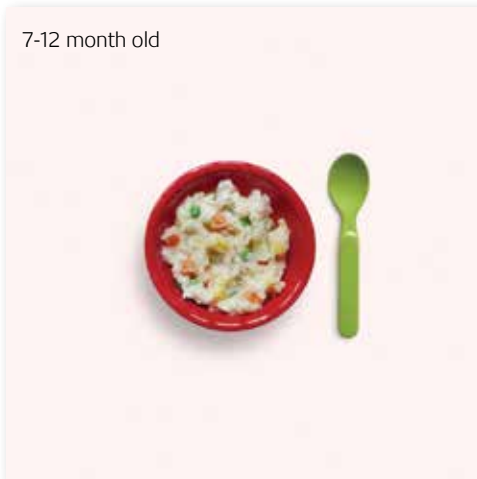
5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



££

Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 50p to 90p
per portion

Fish pie

1.4kg (1,400g) potatoes washed and diced or peeled and diced

100ml semi-skimmed milk

350g frozen white fish fillets

30g vegetable fat spread

200ml semi-skimmed milk

30g cornflour

2 tablespoons water

150g frozen sweetcorn, or sweetcorn
canned in water

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Boil the potatoes in water for about 15 minutes until soft. Drain and mix with the first quantity of semi-skimmed milk, mashing to a desired consistency.
2. Place the frozen fish fillets in a dish and either microwave gently for about 5 minutes to cook them, or place them between two heatproof plates over the pan of boiling water cooking the potatoes. (The heat from the steam will cook the fish.) Flake the fish, making sure that there are no bones remaining.
3. In a separate pan, heat the fat spread and add the remaining milk. Blend the cornflour with 2 tablespoons water and add this to the mixture. Bring to the boil and cook for a few minutes until it thickens. Turn off the heat and add the fish, sweetcorn and black pepper.
4. Place the fish mixture in a bowl, top with the mashed potato, and grill the top of the pie before serving. If the pie has been left to cool, heat it through in a hot oven (180°C / 350°F / Gas 4) for about 10 to 15 minutes.

For babies

- If serving this pie to a baby, make sure there are no bones in the fish, mash the pie well, and cool before serving.

Mediterranean pie

- 1.4kg (1,400g) potatoes, washed and diced, or peeled and diced
- 100ml semi-skimmed milk
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, peeled and diced
- 1 teaspoon garlic paste or 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon bouillon powder
- 1 red pepper, washed, de-seeded and sliced
- 1 courgette, washed, topped and tailed and cut into cubes
- 1 large can (400g) chickpeas, drained and rinsed (drained weight 240g)
- 1 large can (400g) chopped tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs
- 40g sunflower seeds

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

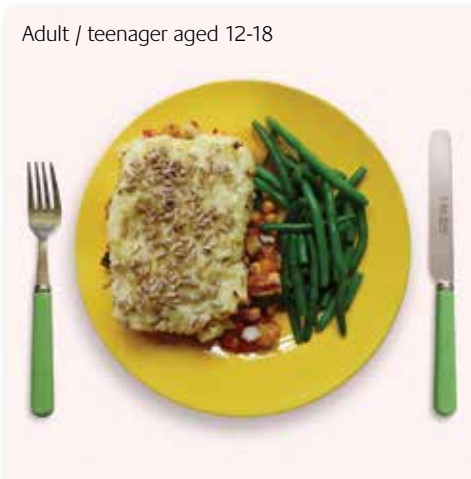
1. Boil the potatoes in water for about 15 minutes until soft. Drain and mix with the semi-skimmed milk, mashing to a desired consistency.
2. In a large pan, heat the vegetable oil and add the onion, garlic and bouillon powder. Fry gently, stirring, until the onion softens.
3. Add the red pepper, courgette, chickpeas, tomatoes and dried mixed herbs. Simmer until all the vegetables are soft.
4. Put the vegetable mixture in an ovenproof bowl and top with the mashed potato. Sprinkle sunflower seeds on the top.
5. If the potato and filling are both still hot, you can just grill the top of the pie before serving. Otherwise heat the pie through in a hot oven (180°C / 350°F / Gas 4) for about 10 to 15 minutes.

For babies

- If serving this pie to a baby, don't add the bouillon powder until after you have taken out the baby's portion. Mash the pie well, and allow it to cool before serving.

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



££

Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 50p to 90p
per portion

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



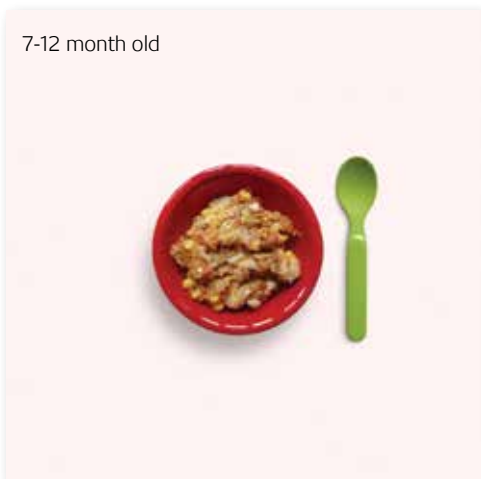
5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



££

Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 50p to 90p
per portion

Shepherdess pie

1.4kg (1,400g) old potatoes, washed and diced, or peeled and diced

100ml semi-skimmed milk

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1 small onion, peeled and diced

1 teaspoon garlic paste or 1 clove garlic, crushed

1 teaspoon bouillon powder

250g ready-to-eat vegetarian mince, or reconstituted dried vegetarian mince

1 carrot, peeled and diced

1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs

1 large can (400g) chopped tomatoes

200ml water

40g grated Cheddar cheese

1. Boil the potatoes in water for about 15 minutes until soft. Drain and mix with the semi-skimmed milk, mashing to a desired consistency.
2. Heat the oil in a large pan, add the onion, garlic and bouillon powder and fry for a few minutes until the onion softens.
3. Add all the other ingredients except for the cheese, and simmer the mixture for about 15 minutes until the vegetables are all soft.
4. Place the mixture in a heatproof dish, top with the mashed potato and sprinkle with the grated cheese.
5. If the potato and filling are both still hot, you can just grill the top of the pie before serving. Otherwise heat the pie through in a hot oven (180°C / 350°F / Gas 4) for about 10 to 15 minutes.

For babies

- If serving this pie to a baby, don't add the bouillon powder until after you have taken out the baby's portion. Mash the pie well, and allow it to cool before serving.

Stews and hotpots

From Hungarian goulash to Mexican chilli – stews are popular across the globe. Stews are a great way of getting lots of vegetables into a one-pot meal and they can be prepared in advance.

Stewing basically means cooking ingredients in liquid, slowly and gently. The slow and gentle cooking method makes tougher cuts of meat a perfect choice for stews. Meat becomes tender and flavourful after stewing. Using less expensive cuts of meat such as shoulder of lamb, beef skirt or brisket, chicken thighs or pork hock is a great way to stay within your food-shopping budget and a butcher will be able to advise you on good cuts for stewing.

You'll see, from the examples of recipes on the following pages, that recipes with meat in them are more expensive than the meat-free options. Plenty of stews use different kinds of beans rather than meat as the main source of protein. Bean-based stews can be a tasty, cost-effective alternative to meat-based stews and they're just as nutritious. The easiest way to buy most beans is canned, as cooking them from dried can be time-consuming and use a lot of gas or electricity unless you have a pressure cooker to cook them more quickly. You can add lentils and split peas without soaking or cooking them first, as they will cook while the stew is cooking.

Beans that can be added to stews

All of the beans below make great additions to stews. You can buy canned or dried pulses with Healthy Start or Best Start Foods. Canned pulses must be in water.

Aduki beans
Black beans
Black-eyed peas
Butter beans
Cannellini beans
Edamame beans
Kidney beans
Lentils (red or green)
Pinto beans
Split peas

Four top tips for cooking stews

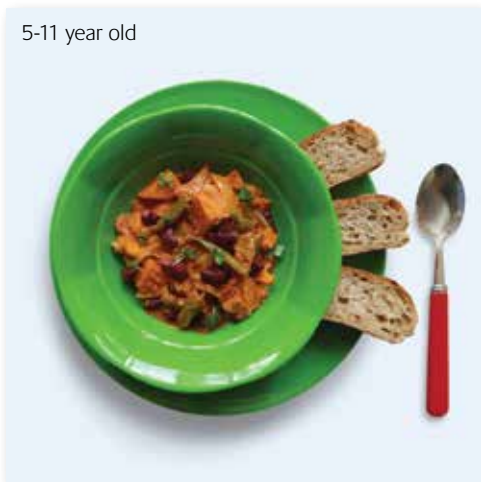
- Make sure ingredients are cut into similar-sized pieces to ensure even cooking.
- Stir occasionally to make sure the ingredients don't stick to the bottom.
- Cook over a medium or low heat to make the ingredients tender and the flavours blend.
- Keep the lid on when stewing so that liquid does not evaporate.

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



££

Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 50p to 90p
per portion

African sweet potato stew

- 1 1/2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, peeled and diced
- 1 red pepper, de-seeded and diced
- 450g sweet potato, peeled and diced
- 75g frozen green beans
- 1 large can (400g) chopped tomatoes
- 1 large can (400g) red kidney beans, drained and rinsed (drained weight 240g)
- 2 heaped tablespoons (85g) smooth peanut butter
- 1 teaspoon chilli powder
- 300ml water
- 1 teaspoon freshly chopped herbs such as coriander or parsley (optional)

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Heat the oil in a large pan and fry the onions until they start to soften.
2. Add all the other ingredients and bring to the boil, stirring well. If you are serving children under 5 with this recipe, you can add the chilli powder after cooking, after the children's portions have been put on one side.
3. Simmer for about 20 minutes until the vegetables are soft.
4. Sprinkle with the fresh herbs before serving.

For babies

- Mash well and cool before serving to babies.

Tip

- You can use canned green beans in water instead of frozen beans.

Bean and veggie sausage hotpot

- 1 1/2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, peeled and diced
- 1 teaspoon garlic paste or 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 large potato, washed and cubed
- 3 carrots, peeled and diced
- 4 vegetarian sausages, each cut into 4 pieces
- 1 large can (400g) chopped tomatoes
- 1 large can (400g) cannellini beans (drained)
- 200g frozen peas
- 350ml water

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Heat the oil in a large pan and fry the onion and garlic until the onion starts to soften.
2. Add all the other ingredients to the pan and stir well. Bring to the boil and simmer gently for about 15 minutes until the vegetables are cooked.

For babies

- If serving this meal to a baby, mash well and allow to cool before serving.

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old

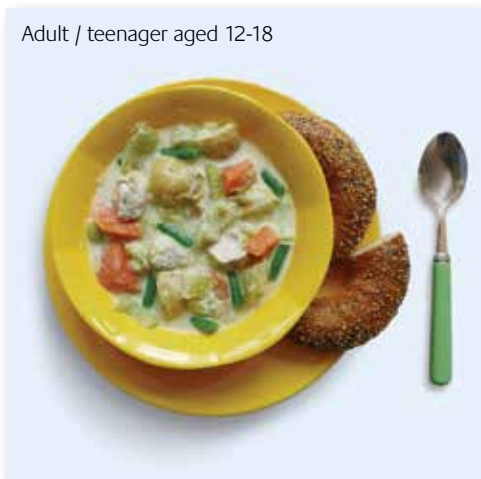


££

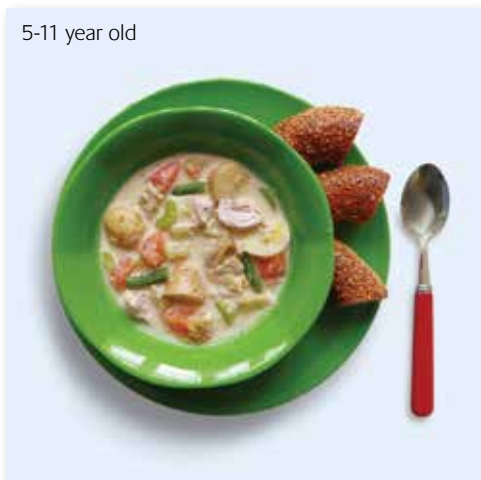
Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 50p to 90p
per portion

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



Creamy chicken and leek hotpot

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 large leeks (about 200g), washed and sliced into 1cm slices
- 3 large carrots (about 300g), peeled and cubed
- 2-3 stalks celery (about 100g), washed and sliced
- 300g chicken breasts, cubed
- 400g potatoes, washed and cubed
- 100g frozen green beans, chopped
- 500ml water
- 200g low-fat soft cheese

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Heat the oil in a large pan. Add the leeks, carrots, celery and chicken and fry for 2 to 3 minutes.
2. Add the potatoes, green beans and water, bring to the boil and simmer for about 20 minutes until the vegetables and chicken are cooked.
3. Turn off the heat, stir in the soft cheese until evenly distributed and serve immediately.

For babies

- If serving this meal to a baby, chop the meat and vegetables finely, and allow to cool before serving.

Tip

- You can use canned carrots in water or frozen carrots instead of fresh carrots, and use fresh green beans or green beans canned in water instead of frozen beans.

££

Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 50p to 90p
per portion

Goulash

- 1 1/2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, peeled and diced
- 350g lean pork meat, diced
- 1 green pepper, de-seeded and sliced
- 1 large potato, washed and diced
- 2 large (400g) cans chopped tomatoes
- 1 large (400g) can cannellini beans drained and rinsed (246g drained weight)
- 1 tablespoon paprika powder (this can be left out if a less spicy taste is preferred)
- 1 teaspoon bouillon powder
- 1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Heat the vegetable oil in a large pan and fry the onion and pork until the meat is browned on all sides and the onion is starting to soften.
2. Add the green pepper and potato and fry for 1 or 2 minutes.
3. Add all the other ingredients, bring to the boil and then simmer for 15 to 20 minutes until all the ingredients are cooked.

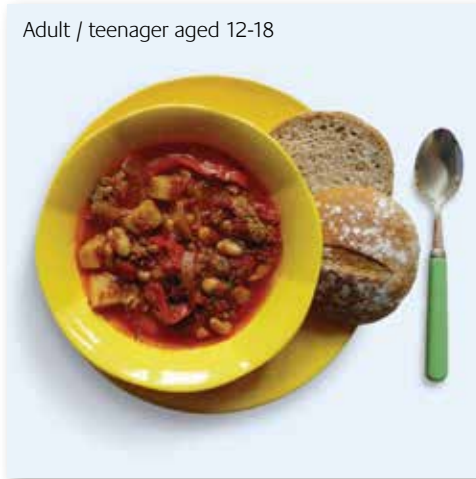
For babies

If serving this meal to a baby:

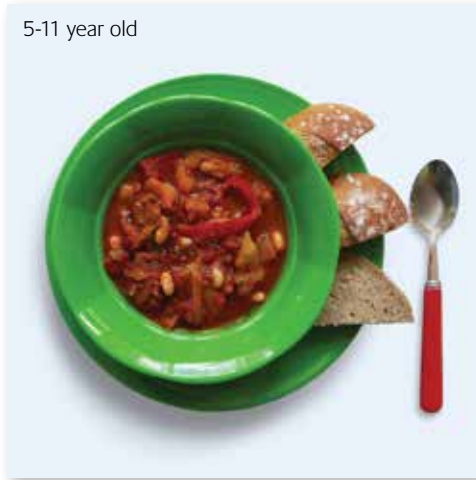
- don't add the bouillon powder or paprika powder until after you have taken out the baby's portion
- chop the meat and vegetables finely, and
- allow to cool before serving.

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 90p to £1.25
per portion

Rice recipes

Rice is the most commonly eaten staple food across the world. Its low cost and versatility make it a great base for a variety of healthy meals. All the recipes in this section can be cooked in one pot or saucepan, saving you time and washing-up! The only other equipment you'll need is a cutting board, knife, tin opener and spoon.

There are lots of different kinds of rice available in most supermarkets. All the recipes in this section have been made using supermarket value range long grain white rice, but other varieties of rice would work well too. Our recipes are based on 200g of dried rice. If you don't have scales, this is equivalent to 1 cup (240ml) or 14 tablespoons.

There are lots of rice-based ready meals available in supermarkets. Often they come in microwavable pouches and are very expensive for the portion size you get. Making your own rice-based meals is much cheaper and often a healthier and tastier option.

If you are keeping cooked rice, you need to take great care to store it correctly. Keep it in the fridge but for no more than 24 hours. And make sure it is heated through to piping hot.

The following pages contain a range of one-pot rice recipes.

You can swap white rice for brown rice in all these recipes, but it takes 10-15 minutes more to cook brown rice until tender. Keep the lid on so that there is plenty of steam to cook the rice.

Other grains

You can base main meals around other grains such as couscous, bulgar wheat, quinoa, barley, oatmeal, cornmeal, cassava, millet, buckwheat, rye or sorghum.

Many cuisines around the world use different grains as the main staple food, and these can often be used alongside other sauces and toppings in this recipe guide. The grains can be made into porridges, boiled as you might boil rice, or can be cooked as tortillas or breads.

All grains are a good source of energy because of their starch content, protein, B vitamins and minerals such as copper, manganese, magnesium and phosphorus. Wholegrain versions are high in fibre.

Egg-fried rice

- 400ml water
- 200g white rice
- 6 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, peeled and diced
- 1 red pepper, de-seeded and diced

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Bring the water to the boil, add the rice, bring to the boil again and stir once. Place a lid on the pan and simmer for about 5 to 10 minutes. Turn off the heat and leave the rice in the pan with the lid. It should absorb all the water and be tender.
2. Break the eggs into a bowl and beat them until the yolks and whites are mixed.
3. In a frying pan, heat the oil and fry the onion and red pepper until they soften.
4. Add the rice to the vegetables and heat through.
5. Pour the egg mixture over the rice and, stirring all the time, cook the mixture until the eggs are cooked.
6. Serve immediately.

For babies

- If serving this meal to a baby, allow to cool before serving.

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



£

Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= less than 50p
per portion

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



Jerk chicken with rice and beans

- 1 large skinless chicken breast (about 200g), cut into strips
- 1 heaped tablespoon jerk seasoning
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, peeled and diced
- 1 green pepper, de-seeded and sliced
- 1 large can (410g) red kidney beans, drained and rinsed (drained weight 240g)
- 200g white rice
- 400ml water

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Coat the chicken strips in jerk seasoning and stir well. Leave in the fridge for an hour to marinate. (If serving this to a baby, leave some chicken unseasoned, cook it separately, and add it to some of the cooked rice mixture at the end.)
2. In a large saucepan, heat the oil and fry the onion and green pepper for 2 to 3 minutes.
3. Add the chicken and cook for 2-3 minutes.
4. Add the kidney beans, rice and water to the mixture and bring to the boil.
5. Simmer for about 20 minutes with the lid on the pan until the rice has absorbed the water and the chicken and vegetables are cooked.

For babies

- If serving this meal to a baby, chop the meat and vegetables finely, and allow to cool before serving.

££

Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 50p to 90p
per portion

Turkey and vegetable pilaf

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon garlic paste or 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs
- 1 teaspoon bouillon powder
- 200g raw turkey breast, cut into strips
- 1 green pepper, de-seeded and diced
- 1 large tomato, diced
- 150g frozen sweetcorn
- 200g white rice
- 400ml water

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Heat the oil in a large pan and add the garlic, herbs, bouillon powder and turkey strips. Cook for a few minutes, stirring occasionally, until the turkey is slightly browned.
2. Add the vegetables and rice and cook gently for 1 minute.
3. Pour over the water, bring to the boil stirring all the time and then simmer gently for about 15 minutes with a lid on until the rice and vegetables are cooked.

Tips

- You can use any other meat or fish in a pilaf, and a variety of vegetables. You could try using frozen peas or green beans, carrots, courgette, butternut squash or other small amounts of vegetables you have left over from other recipes.
- To make a vegetarian version, use Quorn, chickpeas or any other peas or beans instead of turkey.

For babies

- If serving this meal to a baby, don't add the bouillon powder until after you have taken out the baby's portion.
- Chop the meat and vegetables finely, and allow to cool before serving.

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



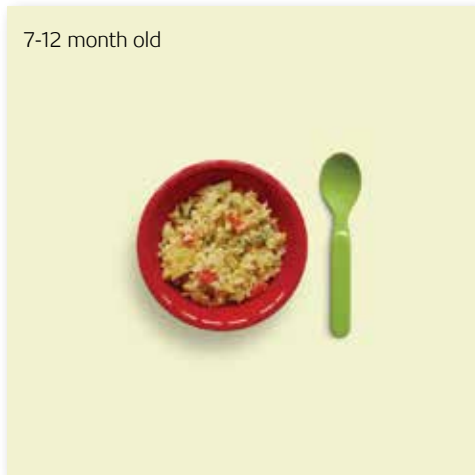
5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



££

Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 50p to 90p
per portion

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



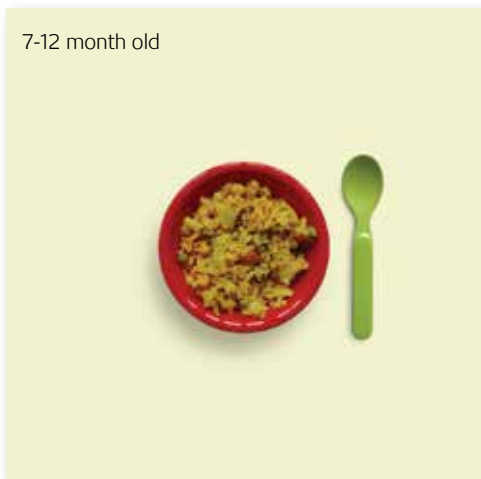
5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 50p to 90p
per portion

Vegetable biryani

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons medium curry powder
- 1 teaspoon bouillon powder
- 1 onion, peeled and diced
- 1 large carrot, peeled and diced
- 1 large potato, washed and cubed (no need to peel)
- 100g frozen peas
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cauliflower, broken into small pieces
- 1 large can (400g) chickpeas, drained and rinsed (240g drained weight)
- 200g white rice
- 400ml water

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Heat the oil in a large pan and add the curry powder, bouillon powder and onion and cook for a few minutes until the onion softens.
2. Add the carrot, potato, peas, cauliflower, chickpeas and rice and stir for 1 minute.
3. Pour over the water and simmer gently with the lid on the pan for about 20 minutes until the rice is tender and the vegetables are all cooked.

For babies

If serving this meal to a baby:

- don't add the bouillon powder until after you have taken out the baby's portion
- chop the vegetables finely, and
- allow to cool before serving.

Pasta recipes

Pasta is a great way to get a variety of vegetables into family meals. The quick cooking time of pasta makes pasta-based meals convenient for busy families.

You will find lots of different kinds of pasta in the supermarket. Choose a variety that works with your food budget or that you know you and your family will enjoy. We use about 450g of pasta in recipes for four adults. Most pasta comes in packets of 500g or 1 kg (1000g) so you should be able to estimate the amount easily.

There are lots of pasta sauces and ready-made pasta meals available in supermarkets, but many of them are expensive and contain unnecessary amounts of sugar, fat and salt. Making your own pasta sauce is a great way to save money and provide healthier meals for your family that taste a lot better than the bought versions.

Pasta is the general name given to spaghetti and the different shapes of pasta that are sold under a range of names such as penne, fusilli, farfalle and tagliatelle, and it also includes lasagna sheets.

Fresh pasta is usually a lot more expensive than dried pasta and has to be cooked and eaten quite quickly once you buy it. Dried pasta can be easily stored and is just as nutritious as fresh pasta.

Tips for cooking pasta

Add the pasta to a large pan of boiling water. The amount of time it takes to cook depends on the shape of the pasta, but it usually cooks in about 15 minutes. It is best if the pasta feels slightly firm when you bite into it.

- Don't add oil to the water.
- Don't add salt to the water.
- Cook with the lid on.
- Don't overcook. Pasta cooks fairly quickly, so keep an eye on the time!

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



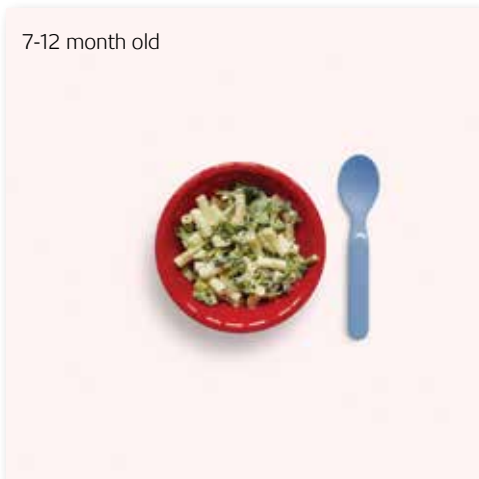
5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



££

Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 50p to 90p
per portion

Green mac and cheese

500g macaroni

1 head (about 600g) broccoli, cut into florets

200g (1 tub) low-fat soft cheese

200ml semi-skimmed milk

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Cook the macaroni in boiling water for about 15 minutes until it is soft. Place the broccoli in the same pan as the macaroni after about 10 minutes, or steam the broccoli over the boiling macaroni in a colander.
2. Drain the macaroni and broccoli and then stir in the low-fat soft cheese and milk.
3. Heat through if necessary before serving.

Other vegetables you can use

- Instead of broccoli you can use any other green vegetable in season such as finely chopped spring greens, chopped green beans, courgettes, green peppers, peas, cauliflower, spinach or any frozen green vegetable.

For babies

- Chop the vegetables and macaroni finely, and allow to cool before serving.

Pasta with green beans and peas

450g dry pasta or spaghetti
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 small onion, peeled and diced
1 teaspoon bouillon powder
250g frozen green beans
250g frozen broad beans
300g frozen peas

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Cook the pasta or spaghetti in boiling water until cooked (see page 47) and then drain.
2. In a large pan, heat the oil and fry the onion and bouillon powder for a few minutes until the onion softens.
3. Add the remaining vegetables and heat through with a lid on until the vegetables are cooked.
4. Mix the pasta and vegetable mixture together and serve.

For babies

If serving this meal to a baby:

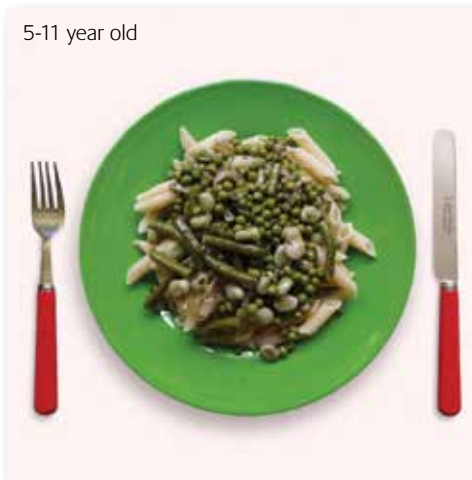
- don't add the bouillon powder until after you have taken out the baby's portion
- chop the vegetables and pasta finely, and
- allow to cool before serving.

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



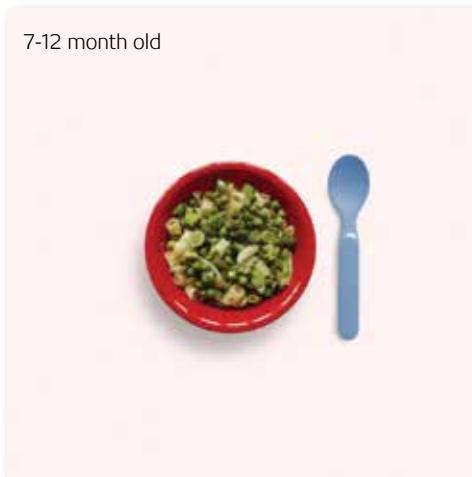
5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= less than 50p
per portion

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



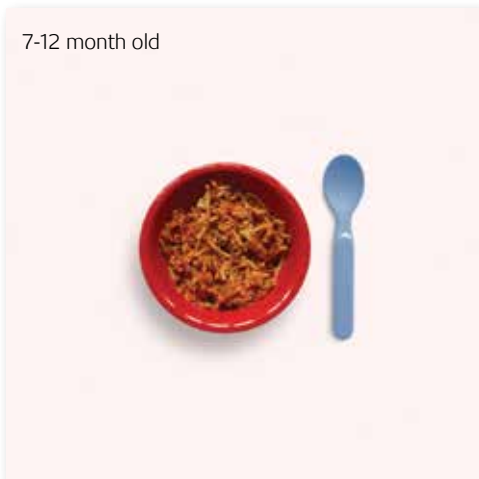
5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



££

Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 50p to 90p
per portion

Spaghetti Bolognese

200g lean minced beef

1 small onion, peeled and diced

1 medium carrot, peeled and grated

1 teaspoon garlic purée or 1 clove garlic,
crushed

1 teaspoon bouillon powder

1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs

1 large can (400g) chopped tomatoes

75g porridge oats

200ml water

450g spaghetti

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Dry-fry the mince with the onion, carrot, garlic, bouillon powder and mixed herbs until the mince is browned.
2. Add the tomatoes, oats and water and simmer gently for 15 to 20 minutes with a lid on until the meat and vegetables are cooked.
3. While the Bolognese is cooking, boil the spaghetti in water until tender (see page 48), and then drain.
4. Serve the Bolognese sauce over the pasta.

For babies

If serving this meal to a baby:

- don't add the bouillon powder until after you have taken out the baby's portion, and
- chop the meat sauce and spaghetti finely, and allow to cool before serving.

Tuna pasta

- 450g dried pasta (this can be pasta shapes or spaghetti)
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, peeled and diced
- 1 green pepper, de-seeded and diced
- 1 teaspoon garlic paste or 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs
- 1 teaspoon bouillon powder
- 1½ large cans (400g) chopped tomatoes (total 600g)
- 2 cans tuna (185g per can) in brine, drained (total 275g drained weight)

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Boil the dried pasta in a large pan of water until it is cooked (see page 47).
2. Heat the oil in a large saucepan and add the onion, pepper, garlic, herbs and bouillon powder and fry, stirring regularly, until the onions and peppers are soft.
3. Add the canned tomatoes and tuna and heat through.
4. Add the cooked pasta and stir thoroughly until the tuna pasta is heated through.

For babies

If serving this meal to a baby:

- don't add the bouillon powder until after you have taken out the baby's portion
- chop the pasta finely, and
- allow to cool before serving.

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



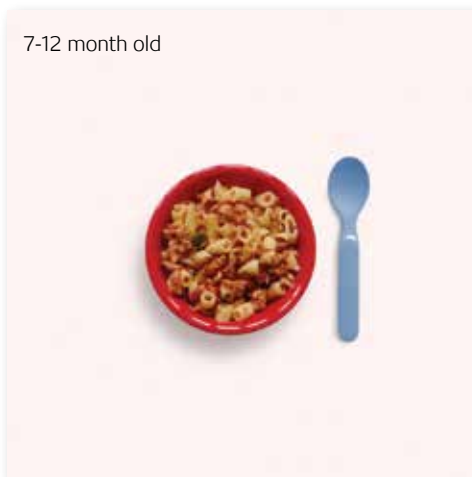
5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



££

Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 50p to 90p
per portion

No-cook meals

If you're in a hurry, the weather is hot or you want to make a simple meal, sandwiches and salads are a great way of providing a nutritious meal for you and your family.

No-cook meals can also be slightly cheaper to produce than cooked meals as you don't need to use any gas or electricity to make them.

Good choices for sandwich fillings and salad ingredients

Bean spreads such as houmous	• Raw vegetables: carrots, peppers, beans
Eggs	• Roasted vegetables
Low-fat soft cheese or spreadable cheese	• Salad vegetables: leaves, tomatoes, cucumber
Nut spreads such as peanut butter	• Sweetcorn
Nuts and seeds	• Tuna or other canned fish
Peas, beans and lentils	

Are hot meals more nutritious than cold meals?

Sometimes people think you have to have a hot meal for it to be nutritious, but if your meal consists of all the same components from the different food groups (starchy foods, meat or alternatives, dairy foods, fruits and vegetables), cold meals and packed lunches can be just as nutritious.

Packed lunch tips

Making packed lunches for children who go to school or for partners or family members going to work is much cheaper than buying food in sandwich bars or supermarkets, and you will know what went into them!

Packed lunches should contain a starchy base such as bread, pitta bread, a wrap or a pasta, rice or couscous salad; a meat or alternative such as egg, canned fish, houmous, peanut butter or soft cheese; some vegetables; some fruit; and a drink of milk or a yoghurt.

Some of the dishes in this resource can be served cold as salads the next day if they are refrigerated overnight.

Tip

- Raw vegetables such as carrots, peppers, celery and cucumber are quick and easy accompaniments to any no-cook meal.

Peanut butter and banana sandwiches, with carrot and cucumber

8 slices wholemeal bread
4 tablespoons (160g) peanut butter
2 large bananas, peeled and sliced
160g carrots, peeled and cut into sticks
160g cucumber, washed and cut into sticks

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Spread the peanut butter onto four slices of the bread.
2. Add the sliced banana and top each sandwich with another slice of bread.
3. Serve the sandwiches with carrot and cucumber sticks.

Good sandwich fillings

- You can make sandwiches with a whole variety of nutritious fillings such as egg, houmous, canned fish such as tuna or sardines, or soft cheese. Add salad vegetables for colour and crunch. Always serve sandwiches with extra vegetables and salad.

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



£

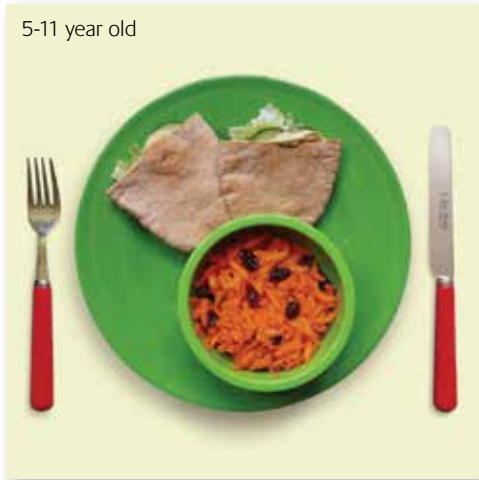
Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= less than 50p
per portion

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 50p to 90p
per portion

Pitta bread with houmous and cucumber, with carrot salad

4 wholemeal pitta bread

300g houmous

120g cucumber, washed and sliced

3 large carrots (about 300g), peeled and grated

60g raisins

1½ tablespoons vegetable oil

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Toast the pitta bread, and then cut off one end of each pitta to let out the steam and make a pocket.
2. Fill with houmous and cucumber sticks.
3. Mix the grated carrot, raisins and oil to make a salad.

For babies

- Serve the houmous, cucumber, carrot salad and pitta bread separately.

Savoury couscous salad with tuna

- 300g couscous
- 200g frozen sweetcorn
- 550ml boiling water
- 1 can tuna in brine (drained weight 138g)
- 1 large tomato, washed and chopped
- 1 large can (410g) chickpeas, drained and rinsed (240g drained weight)
- 1½ tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon chopped herbs (parsley, mint or coriander all work well)

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Put the couscous and frozen sweetcorn in a large bowl. Pour the boiling water over it, stir and leave to absorb all the water. Fluff with a fork when cool.
2. Drain the tuna and flake the fish.
3. Add the flaked tuna and all the other ingredients to the couscous, stirring well.

For babies

- Chop the tomatoes finely, mash the chickpeas, and allow to cool before serving.

Tip

- You can use hard-boiled egg instead of tuna.

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



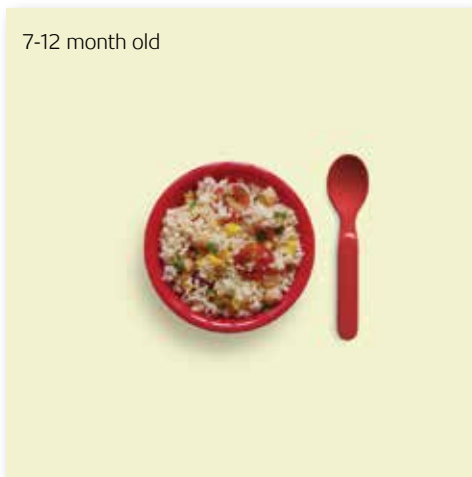
5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



££

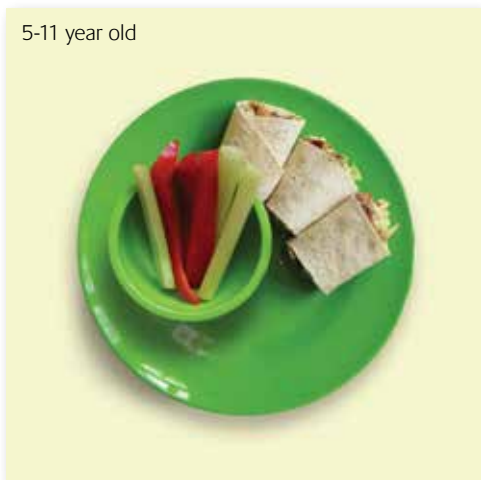
Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 50p to 90p
per portion

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



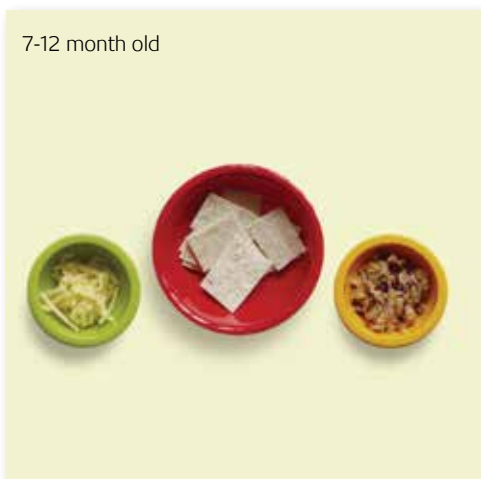
5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 50p to 90p
per portion

Mexican bean and cheese wrap, with red pepper and celery

2 large cans (400g) mixed bean salad, drained and rinsed (520g drained weight)

4 large tortillas or wraps

160g hard cheese (e.g. Cheddar), grated

1 large red pepper, washed, de-seeded and sliced

4 sticks of celery, washed and sliced into sticks

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Mash the mixed beans with a fork.
2. Divide the beans onto the four tortillas and top with the grated cheese.
3. Roll up and slice as needed.
4. Serve with the red pepper and celery sticks.

For babies

- Mash the beans well before serving them to a baby.
- Serve the tortilla, beans and cheese separately.

Puddings

Everyone enjoys a good pudding! Puddings can be a good way of getting milk and fruit into your family's diet.

Custard and rice pudding made with milk, or plain yoghurt, can be served with all sorts of fruit to make a tasty pudding. Some types of fruits can now be bought frozen – for example, mixed berries, mango chunks, or fruit salad. Frozen fruit is often better value than fresh fruit (especially out of season), and can also be bought through Healthy Start or Best Start Foods.

Fruits are often cheaper when they are in season. See page 75 for tips on buying seasonally.

Ideas for fruits that can be served with custard, rice pudding or yoghurt

Baked apples	Pineapple
Stewed apples	Frozen berries
Stewed rhubarb	Frozen mango
Baked pears	Frozen peaches
Baked bananas	Satsuma
Fresh nectarines	segments
Fresh peaches	Orange segments

Puddings for children

Many people serve flavoured or fruit yoghurts and fromage frais to babies and children as desserts. These are often expensive and have a lot of added sugar. If a yoghurt says on the label that it has more than 12.5g of sugar per 100g, that is a lot of sugar. Fromage frais with more than 10g sugar per 100g is high in sugar.

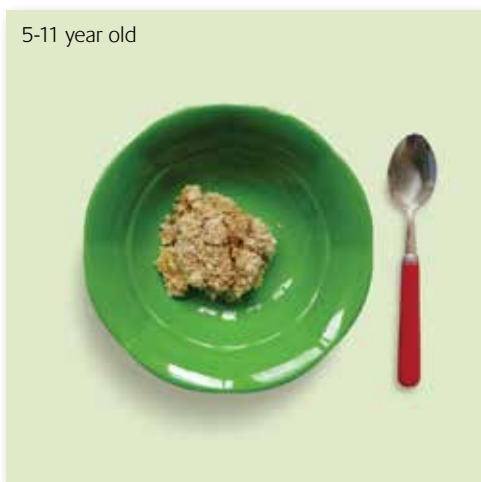
You can make your own fruit yoghurts and fruit fromage frais using plain yoghurt or fromage frais and the fruit of your choice. Children will often like more fruity yoghurts and they can be a good way of using up some leftover stewed fruit or fruit purée. They can be a lot cheaper as well, and you can buy the fruit with your Healthy Start or Best Start Foods payment.

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



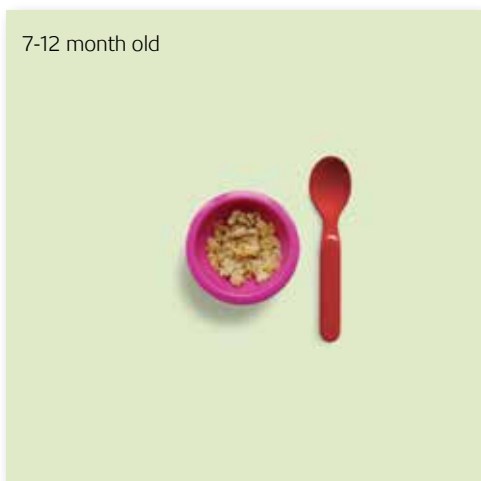
5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= less than 50p
per portion

Apple crumble

- 65g white flour
- 50g vegetable fat spread
- 65g porridge oats
- 40g sugar
- 5 eating apples (prepared weight about 350g)
- 1 teaspoon mixed spice or cinnamon powder

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Heat the oven to 180°C / 350°F / Gas 4.
2. Put the flour in a bowl and add the fat spread to it. Rub the fat spread into the flour with your fingertips until it resembles breadcrumbs. Add the porridge oats and sugar and mix together.
3. Peel, core and slice the apples. Put the apples into a heatproof baking dish, add the spice or cinnamon and mix together.
4. Place the crumble mix over the apple and put the crumble in the oven for 30 to 35 minutes until the fruit is soft and the crumble browned.

For babies

- You can make crumble without adding any sugar.
- Allow to cool before serving.

Tip

- You can use other canned fruit in fruit juice instead of fresh apples.

Banana custard

- 30g custard powder
- 500ml semi-skimmed milk
- 30g sugar
- 4 large bananas (about 500g)

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Blend 1 or 2 tablespoons of the milk with the custard powder to make a paste.
2. Put the remaining milk in a saucepan to heat. Before it comes to the boil, add the custard mixture slowly, stirring all the time so that it blends in and doesn't go lumpy, and then add the sugar.
3. Stir the custard well as it comes to the boil and then simmer for a few minutes until it thickens.
4. Peel the bananas and cut them into chunks. Place in a bowl and pour over the custard.

For babies

- Mash the banana with the custard.

Tips

- You can add any fruit to custard – fresh, stewed or canned in fruit juice.
- If you want to liquidise the fruit and custard together it makes a 'fruit fool'.
- You can also set the custard and fruit in layers in a glass to make it look special.
- You can make custard without sugar for babies as the mashed up banana will sweeten it.

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



£

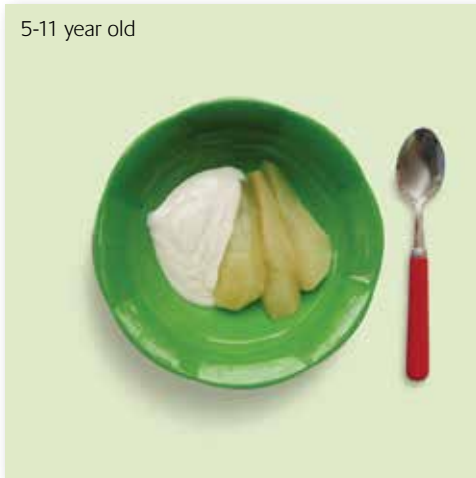
Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= less than 50p
per portion

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



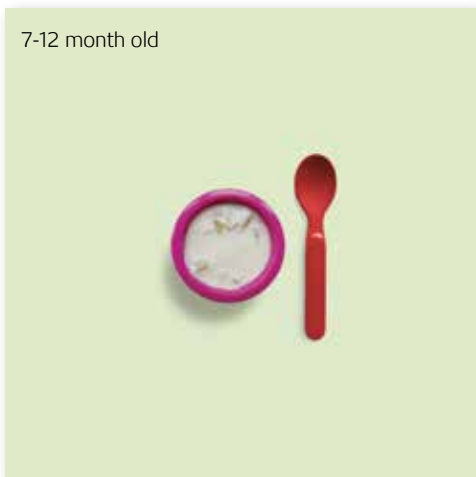
5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



Poached pear with Greek yoghurt and honey

4 large pears
4 tablespoons (80g) honey
360g Greek yoghurt

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Peel the pears, remove the core and cut into quarters.
2. Place the pears in a saucepan of gently simmering water and poach for about 15 minutes.
3. Remove the poached pears and place in a serving bowl. Drizzle with honey and serve with Greek yoghurt.

For babies

- Serve this pudding without the honey. Honey should not be given to under-1s.

££

Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= 50p to 90p
per portion

Rice pudding with raisins

85g pudding rice

850ml semi-skimmed milk

35g sugar

85g raisins

This recipe makes 4 adult-sized portions.

1. Place the rice, milk and sugar in a saucepan and heat gently, stirring all the time, until the mixture just comes to the boil.
2. Turn the heat down and, stirring regularly, allow to simmer gently for about 20 minutes while the rice absorbs the milk.
3. Stir in the raisins and heat through.

For babies

- Leave out the sugar when making desserts for babies.

Other milky puddings

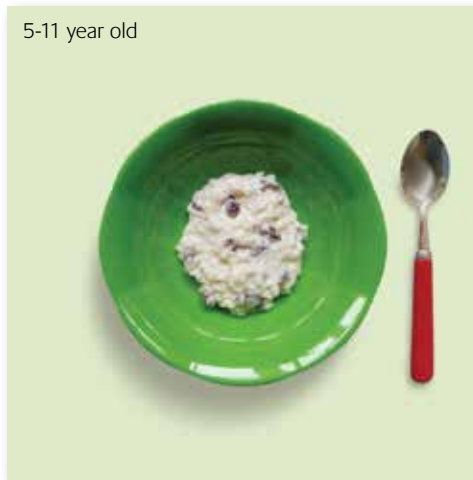
- You can make milky puddings with other cereals, such as semolina, sago or tapioca. You can also add other sorts of dried fruit such as chopped apricots, dates or figs, or you can add fresh fruit.
- For people who don't drink cows' milk, you can make milk puddings from unsweetened calcium-fortified soya milk alternative, but you will need to use about one and a half times the volume of milk given above, and the puddings will take longer to cook.
- If you have the oven on for another dish, you can make the rice pudding in the oven by placing the same ingredients in a greased heatproof dish and baking for about an hour and a half on a bottom shelf.

SUGGESTED PORTION SIZES

Adult / teenager aged 12-18



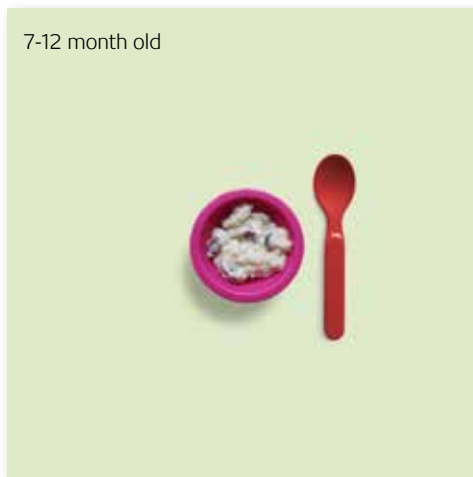
5-11 year old



1-4 year old



7-12 month old



£

Price guide
(at 2020 prices)
= less than 50p
per portion

First foods for babies from 6 months of age

At about 6 months of age, a baby is ready to have some foods to complement the milk he or she has been having from birth. Breastfeeding is still really important during the second six months of life – and lots of research shows that if mum and baby want to carry on breastfeeding into the second year, that is a great choice too. If infant formula is used as the main milk drink, then first infant formula is the only formula needed throughout the first year of life. There is no need to change a healthy baby on to a different type of formula, including follow-on formula, after 6 months of age. Formula-fed babies can move on to whole cows' milk after 1 year of age. You can find out more about which infant formula or other milks to give children on page 73.

What are the best first foods to give at 6 months?

Vegetables are recommended as the first new tastes to introduce to a baby, trying them one at a time to start with to get used to new flavours. Then move on to a variety of fruits, as well as foods such as peas, beans and lentils, meat, fish, eggs and cereals. These all make great first foods to give babies. Babies can be given finger foods to hold from 6 months, and a combination of spoon feeding and self-feeding can be a good way to get infants eating solid foods.

Ideas for first foods using fruits, vegetables and potatoes

It is expensive to buy baby food in jars, pouches and packets, especially when you're first introducing complementary foods and a lot gets wasted. Processed baby foods also taste different to home-made foods, and getting babies used to family foods is an important part of their taste journey. Some ideas for good choices of first foods to introduce from the age of 6 months are shown on the following pages. For more detailed information about feeding babies in the first year of life, see *Eating well: the first year*, available at <https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-infants-new-mums>

It is important to encourage a range of textures during the second 6 months of life so that babies can learn to bite and chew food as their teeth develop during their early years.

Never leave babies alone when they are eating in case they struggle to manage a piece of food in the mouth, as this can be a choking risk.

Giving babies a variety of first foods

The photos on pages 63-70 show how you can use some of the vegetables and fruit you can buy through Healthy Start or Best Start Foods to make first foods for babies. Remember that babies need a wide variety of foods, including beans and lentils, meat, fish, eggs and cereals.

FIRST FOODS: Vegetables

Starchy and other root vegetables are useful first foods. Cook thoroughly and then mash with a little breast milk or infant formula. Potatoes and sweet potatoes can also be added as thickeners for other vegetables. Sweet vegetables – such as carrot or sweet potato – can be combined with less sweet ones when introducing new flavours.

These foods are good choices of first foods to introduce from the age of 6 months. Make sure a wide variety of vegetable foods are offered and that foods from across the rainbow of vegetable colours are introduced into babies' diets. Brightly coloured food will be attractive to infants and can be offered in lots of combinations as first tastes. Never add salt or sugar when preparing food for babies.

Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



AVOCADO

Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



BROCCOLI

Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



BUTTERNUT SQUASH

CARROT

Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



CAULI-FLOWER

Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



COURG-ETTE

Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



GREEN BEANS

Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



MUSH-ROOM

Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



PARSNIP

Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



PEAS

Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



POTATO

RED PEPPER

Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



RUNNER BEANS

Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



SWEDE

Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



SWEET POTATO

Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



FIRST FOODS: Fruit

Fruits make ideal first foods as they are naturally sweet and can be easily made into the right texture. A simple way to serve is to mash the fruit with a fork and then push it through a sieve (or through a mouli or baby blender) if you want to remove skin or seeds. You can add some expressed breast milk (or

infant formula) or a small amount of baby rice to thicken it. Apples and pears can be cooked until mushy and then mashed. Bananas can be mashed until smooth. Or, if not fully ripe, they can be mashed with a small amount of breast milk or infant formula. Never add sugar or salt when preparing food for babies.

Smooth

Mashed

Finger food



APPLE

Smooth/mashed

Finger food



BANANA

Smooth

Mashed

Finger food



CANNED PEACH

Smooth/mashed

Finger food

KIWI



Smooth

Mashed

Finger food

MANGO



Smooth

Mashed

Finger food

MELON



Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



PEAR

Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



PINEAPPLE

Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



PLUM

**RASP-
BERRIES**

Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



**STRAW-
BERRIES**

Smooth



Mashed



Finger food



**WATER-
MELON**

Smooth/mashed

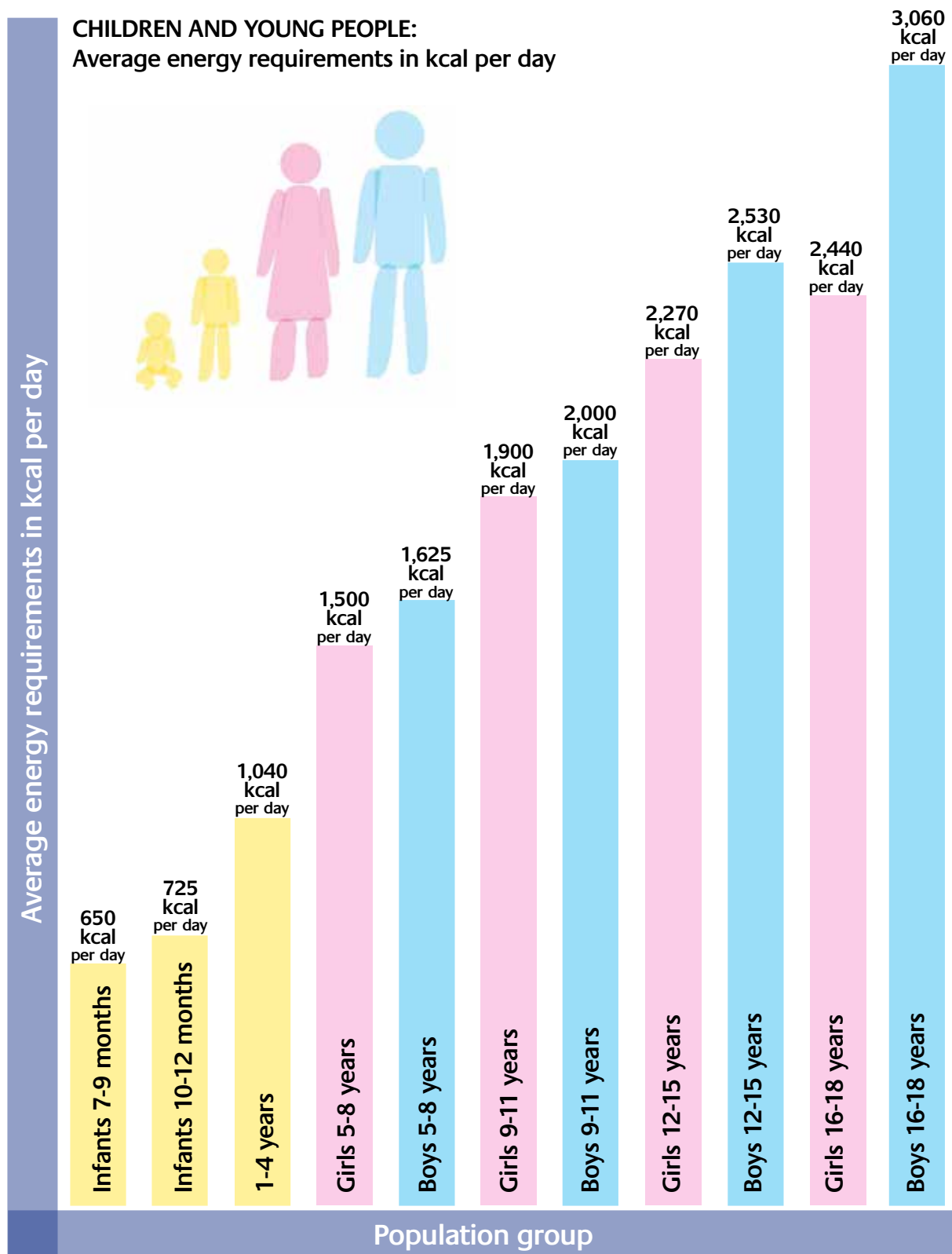


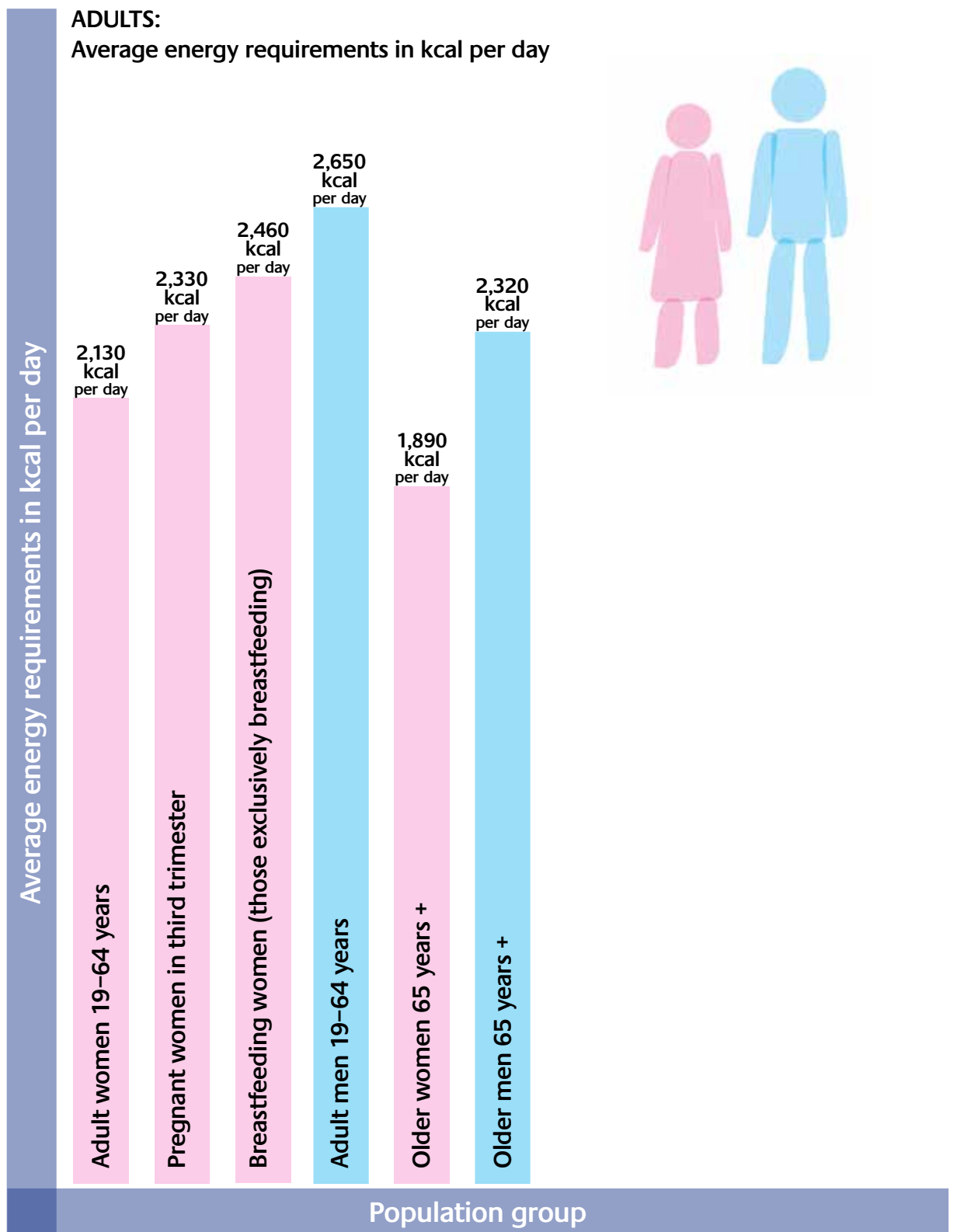
Finger food



Energy requirements by age and gender

There are general estimates of how much energy (calories) people need by age and gender, and we use these to estimate portion sizes. You can see from the tables below how energy needs vary, but it is important to remember that individuals will have different appetites depending on how active they are and how tall and heavy they are.





A simple guide to choosing infant formula and milks for infants and young children

✓ = Safe to give this milk ✗ = Do not give this milk

	Can I buy this milk through Healthy Start or Best Start Foods?	Can I give this milk to...			
		Infants 0-6 months	Infants 6 months - 1 year	Toddlers 1 year - 2nd birthday	Toddlers 2 - 4 years
Breastmilk	Free!	✓	✓	✓	✓
Whole (full-fat) cows' milk as the main milk drink	Yes	✗	✗	✓	✓
Semi-skimmed cows' milk as the main milk drink	Yes	✗	✗	✗	✓ If toddlers are eating well
1% fat or skimmed cows' milk as the main milk drink	Yes	✗	✗	✗	✗
INFANT FORMULA					
Infant formula suitable from birth (cows' milk based)	Yes	✓	✓	Only needed if recommended by a health professional	Only needed if recommended by a health professional
Follow-on formula suitable from 6 months of age	No	✗	Not recommended	Not recommended	Not recommended
Growing-up milks and toddler milks suitable from around 1 year of age	No	✗	✗	Not recommended	Not recommended
OTHER MILKS					
Pasteurised whole goats' milk	No	✗	✗	✓	✓
Pasteurised whole sheep's milk	No	✗	✗	✓	✓
Unsweetened calcium fortified plant-based milk alternatives (e.g. soya, nut, oat, pea, coconut milk)	No	✗	✗	Can be used but seek advice to make sure the overall diet is adequate in energy and nutrients.	Can be used but seek advice to make sure the overall diet is adequate in energy and nutrients.
Rice milk alternative – Do not give to children under 5 years of age.	No	✗	✗	✗	✗
Evaporated or condensed milks	No	✗	✗	✗	✗

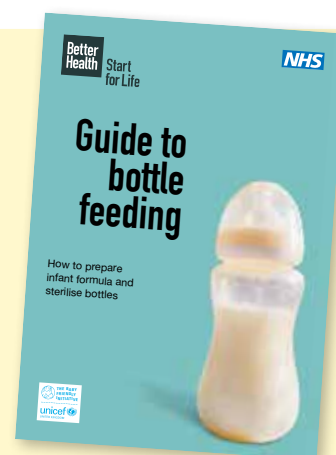
What about infant formula marketed for hungry babies, infant formula for babies with ‘special dietary needs’ or infant formula made from soya protein?

There are a range of infant formula which make claims about how they can be beneficial to infant health (for example, by reducing colic or constipation, or being good for hungry babies). **Most of these are not recommended by health professionals** and should only be used under medical supervision. It is not sensible for families to spend their Healthy Start or Best Start Foods payments on products that are not recommended, as there may be a risk to infant health from their use. For current information on all infant milks marketed in the UK, health professionals can access information at www.infantmilkinfo.org

A simple guide to choosing infant milks, for parents and carers, can be accessed at www.firststepsnutrition.org/parents-carers

Making up infant milks safely

It is important that, if families use their Healthy Start or Best Start Foods payments to buy first infant formula, they receive independent information on safe use and preparation. Independent information on making up milks safely can be found at <https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/bottle-feeding-resources/guide-to-bottle-feeding/>



Breastfeeding helplines

National Breastfeeding Helpline
0300 100 0212

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers
0300 330 5453

The Breastfeeding Network
0300 100 0212

• **La Leche League GB**
0345 120 2918

• **NCT Support Line**
0300 330 0700

• **Drugs in Breastmilk information facebook page**
[www.facebook.com/
BfNDrugsinBreastmilkinformation](http://www.facebook.com/BfNDrugsinBreastmilkinformation)

Buying fruit and vegetables in season

Below are examples of fruit and vegetables you can buy through Healthy Start or Best Start Foods. You can buy the things on this list at any time of the year, but the chart shows when they are in season in the UK.

When to buy them?	Vegetables	Fruit
SPRING March to May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> asparagus beetroot broad beans leeks lettuce peas radishes rocket samphire spring cabbage spring greens spring onions watercress 	
SUMMER June to August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> aubergines beetroot broad beans broccoli carrots chilli peppers courgettes cucumber fennel French beans garlic globe artichokes peas peppers radishes runner beans shallots squash sugar snap peas sweetcorn tomatoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> blackcurrants blueberries cherries figs gooseberries loganberries nectarines peaches raspberries redcurrants strawberries
AUTUMN September to November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> broccoli Brussels sprouts cabbage cauliflower celeriac chicory Jersusalem artichoke kale mushrooms parsnips pumpkin spinach squash swede sweetcorn turnip 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> apples blackberries pears damsons greengages grapes plums
WINTER December to February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brussels sprouts cabbage celeriac parsnips purple sprouting broccoli kale leeks spinach swede 	
ALL YEAR ROUND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> potatoes cassava cocoyam dasheen sweet potatoes taro yam <i>Frozen vegetables:</i> broad beans broccoli green beans mixed vegetables peas soya beans spinach sweetcorn <i>Sprouted seeds such as:</i> alfalfa beansprouts mung beans sunflower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Imported vegetables such as:</i> Chinese leaves gourds avocado mooli okra pak choi yard long beans ... and a whole range of vegetables used in Asian and African cookery. <i>Imported fruit such as:</i> banana clementines cranberries grapefruit kiwi fruit lemons limes mango melon oranges papaya passion fruit pineapple pomegranates Sharon fruit

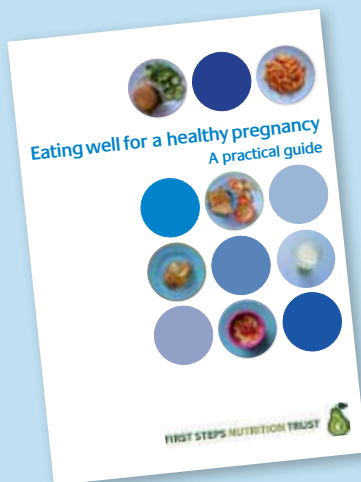
For more information

Eating well in pregnancy and as a new mum

A good diet in pregnancy provides the best start in life for all babies. Healthy Start and Best Start Foods have the potential to support women to eat a better diet in pregnancy and help families eat healthier meals. It is particularly important that teenage mums eat well to protect their own health as well as that of their baby. Healthy Start and Best Start Foods can also help breastfeeding mums to eat well, and the value of the payment doubles in the first year of a baby's life so that mums can buy vegetables, fruit and cows' milk for themselves and their families while breastfeeding.

For more information about eating well in pregnancy, teenage pregnancy and as a new mum, see the resources below. They are all available at www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-resources

Eating well for new mums encourages all new mums to eat well and summarises current thinking on food, nutrition and breastfeeding. It provides photos and recipes for a range of simple, nutritious light meals and snacks perfect for busy mums on the go.



Eating well in the first year of life

It is also important to ensure that infants are supported to eat well once solids are introduced alongside breastmilk (or infant formula) at about 6 months of age. Families who are eligible for the Healthy Start or Best Start Foods payment can use this to buy vegetables and fruit to support complementary feeding. Breastfeeding is recommended throughout the first year, but if mums want to carry on into the second year and beyond, that will contribute to infant and maternal health and should be fully supported. For more information on how to use fruits and vegetables when introducing solids, see page 62.

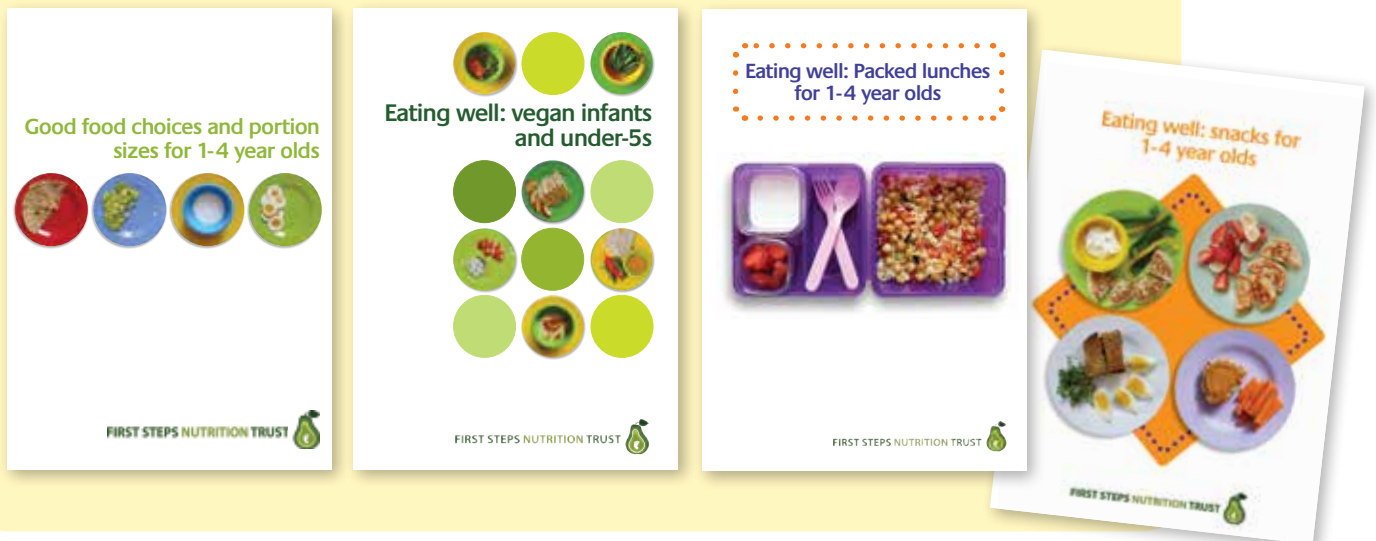
Our resource *Eating well: the first year* can be accessed at <https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-infants-new-mums>



Eating well in the pre-school years

Children aged 1-4 years are also supported with Healthy Start, and in Scotland children aged 1-3 years are supported with Best Start Foods. It is increasingly recognised that these pre-school years are important in determining later food choices and eating patterns. Increasing the amount of fruit and vegetables that young children eat is seen as a priority to reduce overweight, improve oral health and establish better eating habits.

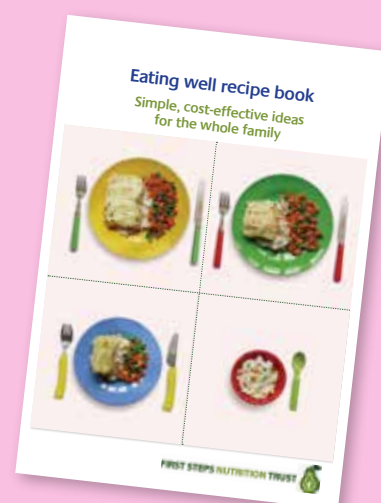
For more information about eating well in the pre-school years, see the resources below, which are available at <https://www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-early-years>



Using the Healthy Start or Best Start Foods payment for family meals

The Healthy Start or Best Start Foods payment can support everyone in the family to eat well. The recipes in this guide have also been produced in an *Eating well recipe book* that can be used to support all families. The payment can be used to buy: plain fresh and frozen vegetables and fruit; vegetables and fruit canned in juice or water; fresh, dried, frozen or canned pulses; and cows' milk – all of which are useful in the preparation of simple and nutritious family meals.

This recipe book is available at www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-resources



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