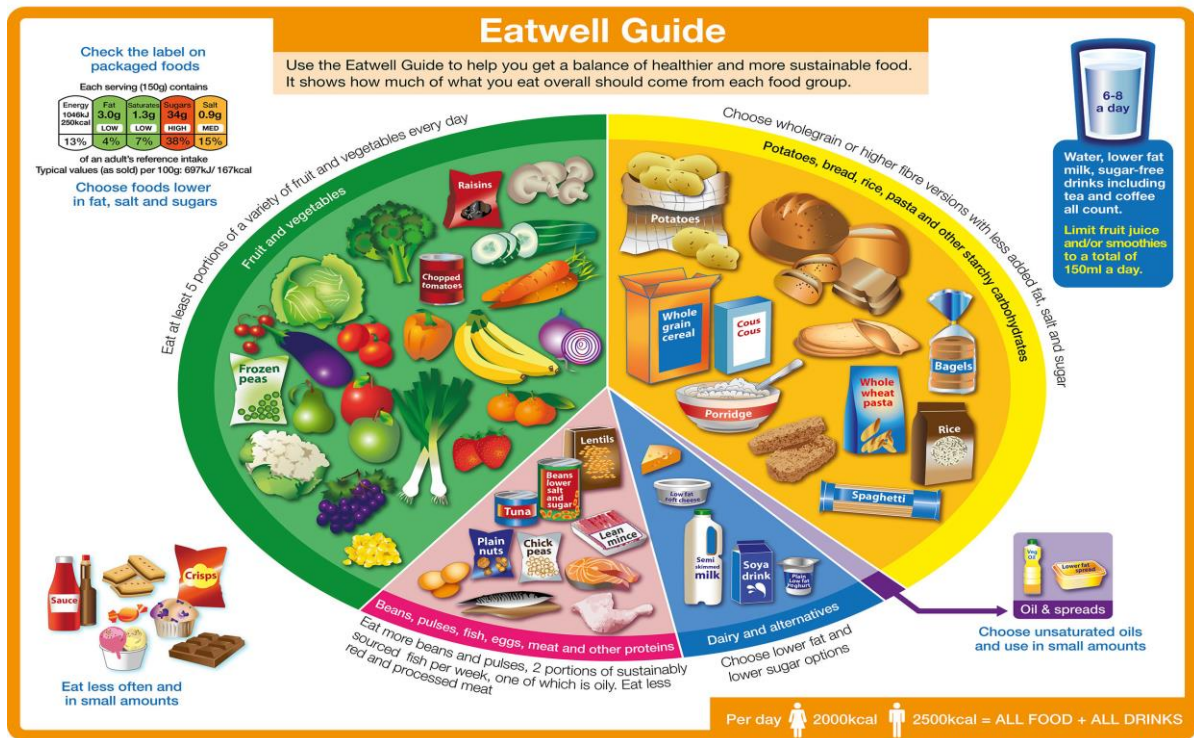


Eating well with ADHD

A healthy balanced diet is important for all children to ensure all nutritional requirements are met and to support normal growth and development.

Children with ADHD should be encouraged to follow a balanced diet which is based on the principles of the Eatwell Guide. Regular physical activity is also encouraged.



- All children should be encouraged to follow a regular meal pattern.
- Snacks are particularly useful if appetite is reduced or improved weight gain is needed.
- At least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables should be encouraged daily.
- Starchy carbohydrates should be included at each mealtime (potatoes, bread, rice, pasta, breakfast cereals). Wholegrain or higher fibre varieties are encouraged.
- Dairy products are an important source of calcium needed to support strong bones and teeth.
- A protein source should be included with lunch and evening meals. Aim to include a variety of beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and poultry.
- Choose unsaturated oils and spreads and eat in small amounts. Unsaturated fats are healthier fats that are usually from plant sources and in liquid form as oil. This includes vegetable oil, rapeseed oil and olive oil; as well as spreads made from these oils.
- A good overall fluid intake is important to maintain hydration. Intake of fruit juices and full sugar drinks should be limited.
- If variety of foods included in diet is limited children and young people may benefit from an age appropriate over the counter vitamin and mineral supplement.

If your child is overweight you will need to consider the following:

- Encourage plenty of physical activity. It is recommended that children should be active for 60 minutes every day.
- See 'Change4life' website for healthy recipes, snack ideas, information on portion sizes and much more (<https://www.nhs.uk/change4life>).
- Limit high fat/ sugar snack foods.
- Ensure reduced fat varieties of dairy products are chosen.
- Always choose sugar free varieties of drinks.
- A family based approach is encouraged to ensure your child does not feel singled out.
- Group based weight management groups for children and young people are available in the community, your consultant, specialist nurse, GP, dietitian or school nurse will be able to provide further information.

If there are concerns about your child being underweight you will need to consider the following:

- If appetite and portion size are small offer meals which are high in energy and protein. Cheese, yoghurt, full fat milk, cream, cream cheese, butter can all be added to meals to increase the energy and protein content.
- Your child's appetite can be affected for parts of the days so aim to maximise intake when appetite is good eg aim to have breakfast prior to taking medications, later in the day the effect of medications may have worn off so plan a high calorie snack after school and have a nutritious supper before bed.
- Milkshakes made with full fat milk are a good way of increasing energy and protein intakes. Add 1 tablespoon of skimmed milk powder (eg Marvel available from supermarkets) to each 100mls of full fat milk when making a milkshake to increase energy and protein.
- Milk based deserts should be offered after lunch and dinner daily eg: custard, rice pudding, ice cream, full fat yogurt/ fromage frais.
- A snack should be encouraged between each meal. Here are some ideas:
 - Flapjack.
 - Breadsticks/crackers dipped in cream cheese / dip / cheese sauce / hummus.
 - Raw vegetables (carrot, tomato, cucumber, celery, mushrooms, baby corn, peppers (green, red, yellow), new potatoes dipped in full fat cream cheese / dip / cheese sauce / hummus.
 - Desserts: Full fat yogurt / fromage frais, Fruit bread & butter pudding, Jelly & custard.
 - Cheese sandwiches / cheese scones / cheese on crackers.
 - Boiled egg and mayonnaise.
 - Handful of peanuts and raisins.
 - Beans and grated cheese on toast with margarine / butter.
 - Fruit platter with full fat yogurt dip.
 - Salami slices / pepperoni / ham / chicken pieces.
 - Butter & peanut butter on a slice of toast.

- Creamy soup (mushroom, vegetable, tomato etc) with croutons/ bread or toast with margarine/ butter.

Dietary Modifications for ADHD

- If you do try a restrictive diet it is important that you do it under medical or dietetic advice and for a limited time period to ensure that growth is not affected.

What if I notice ADHD behaviours after certain foods?

- Recent research indicates a possible link between consumption of artificial additives and an increase in hyperactivity however, there is not enough strong evidence at present.
- If you notice a link between your child's challenging behaviour and consumption of particular foods keep a food and ADHD symptoms diary. If the diary shows a link between specific foods or drinks and behaviour you may be advised to complete a specific dietary elimination.
- This should be jointly undertaken by a dietitian or paediatrician, and the parent and child.
- The British Food Standards Agency advises parents to consider eliminating the following colourings if your child has hyperactive behaviour following these foods:

Artificial Additive	Description	May be found in
Sunset Yellow (E110)	Yellow Colouring	Energy drinks, flavoured vitamin solutions.
Carmosine (E122)	Red Colouring	Flavoured medicines, marzipan, jam.
Tartrazine (E102)	Yellow Colouring	Ice-cream, ice-lollies, jellies, custard powder, energy drinks, fruit squash, flavoured corn snacks e.g. Doritos, noodles.
Ponceau 4R (E124)	Red Colouring	Dessert toppings, salami, fruit pie fillings, cake mixes, soups, trifles.
Sodium Benzoate (E211)	Preservative	Dressings, fizzy drinks, jams, fruit juices. Also found naturally in cranberries, prunes, greengage plums, cinnamon, apples.

Quinoline Yellow (E104)	Yellow Colouring	Sauces, decorations, coatings.
Allura Red AC (E129)	Orange / Red Colouring	Energy drinks, sweets, flavoured medicines

Fish Oil Supplements

- If your child is having a balanced diet they will be able to get omega 3 from 2 portions of oily fish per week (such as salmon, herring, mackerel and sardines) or seeds such as flaxseeds and linseeds.
- It is NOT recommended that patients with ADHD are given fatty acid supplements.

Vitamin and Mineral Supplements

- As with all children, vitamins containing A, C may be required if there is a risk of a vitamin deficiency, especially if your child eats a very limited range of foods.
- It is recommended that all children take a dose of Vitamin D that contains 10mcg, particularly during autumn and winter months.
- A sensible approach is to use an age appropriate over the counter multivitamin rather than several individual high dose vitamins.

Medication and ADHD

- A common side effect of some medications used in ADHD is decreased appetite.
- If your child's weight is affected by these medications and there are concerns they are underweight you should follow the advice above.

Useful addresses and websites

Food Standards Agency
www.eatwell.gov.uk

British Dietetic Association
www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts

This leaflet is intended for information only. It is not a substitute for dietary advice given by a registered dietitian (RD). The advice may not be suitable for everyone. If you need further guidance, please ask your GP to refer you to a registered dietitian.