YOUR CHILD’S HEART FOR LIFE – WITH HEALTHY EATING AND ACTIVE LIVING

A MAGAZINE FOR PARENTS

Three families tell their story

Reading food labels

Getting kids more active

Golden Rules for your child’s heart health

Coping with faddy eaters

TASTY RECIPES THAT ARE GOOD FOR CHILDREN! PARENTS’ QUESTIONS ANSWERED

to find out more, visit www.irishheart.ie
or Lo call 1850 364 364
Until recently, heart disease was viewed as something to become concerned about once we hit middle-age. We now know, however, that heart disease can begin in early childhood as a result of poor diet and lack of physical activity.

In the last year, a lot of attention focused on the increasing levels of child overweight and obesity, conditions which can lead to Type 2 diabetes and, in turn, to early heart disease. We have every reason to be concerned, as these surprising facts from the Irish National Children’s Survey show about the state of our children’s health:

- One out of every ten Irish children (aged 8-12 years) is overweight and each year this figure is increasing.
- One-fifth of Irish children’s energy intake comes from sweets, snacks and biscuits - a very high and unhealthy proportion!
- Children on average eat only a half serving of vegetables per day – combined with fruit, children need to eat five servings each day.

- One in three children watches over two hours of TV every day
- Many of our children and young people are not active enough to be healthy

So, together, we have a lot of work to do. This magazine will provide lots of ideas for small changes, which can help you and your family be more heart healthy. It should answer many of the questions you may have about choosing healthy foods for your children, especially if your child is a fussy eater or, as a teenager, is more definite about what he or she wants. There are lots of tips about shopping, cooking and snacking, as well as ideas about getting your children to be more active.

Starting with Irish Heart Week 2005, let us work together to give our children ‘a heart for life’

### GOLDEN RULES

- The family who eats together is healthier
  It’s a fact that young people who eat with their families consume fewer higher calorie drinks, more fruit and vegetables, and less fat both at home and in meals away from home.

- High Five for fruit and veg
  Five portions of fruit and veg boost intake of Vitamins A, C, and E, especially good for heart health.

- Get up and go
  Children from the age of 5 to 18 need to be physically active for at least one hour a day. Playing in the garden, kicking a football, dancing on a dance mat and PE in school all count.

- Variety is the spice of life
  Break old eating habits – gradually – and buy healthier options. The more foods your child is exposed to, the more balanced their diet. Check your shopping against the Food Pyramid overleaf.

- Turn off the TV more often
  DVDs and computer games may be educational – at a stretch! – but it’s not exercise. Don’t underestimate the power of TV in promoting sugary, high-fat and high salt foods.

- The ‘S’ words
  Some processed foods contain lots of saturated fat, sugar and salt. Buy fresh foods wherever possible to help avoid life-long battles with weight and high blood pressure.
The problem for parents today is that there are so many challenges and obstacles in the way. On the one hand sugary snacks, processed foods and fizzy drinks are waging a battle for the hearts and minds of our children and on the other TV, video, computer as well as other obstacles, such as safety, are limiting the opportunities for our children to be active and enjoy games and sport.

However, as a parent, you’re the star of your children’s reality TV show! What you do influences their lifestyle – what you eat and what you buy influences what they eat, and if you are active that will influence them too.

The harsh reality is that a diet low in fruit and vegetables and high in sugar, fat and salt (often termed junk food) along with inactivity lays the foundation for adult illnesses such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease and cancer.

But small changes to your everyday lives – eating together as a family, buying a variety of fruit and vegetables, going for walks – can be hugely beneficial to your children’s health, and your own.

Getting the Balance Right

Watching our children grow is a wonderful experience. Ensuring that our children become healthy adults is a huge responsibility because a child’s good health is the best gift we can give to him or her.

The harsh reality is that a diet low in fruit and vegetables and high in sugar, fat and salt (often termed junk food) along with inactivity lays the foundation for adult illnesses such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease and cancer.

It’s a tough battle. As parents, we do our best to provide healthy options, but it’s not always easy to put a balanced meal on the table when a toddler is crying at your feet or your teenager is being, well, a teenager. Finding the time most days to cook a healthy meal from scratch, to play ball or go to the park is a constant juggle with so many jobs to be done.
A Young Family

Family life’s a balancing act for Gillian Higgins, mother of two. Now that her daughter, Megan (11), has discovered where lamb chops come from and son Joshua (nearly 2) has discovered the joys of crisps, keeping healthy options on the kitchen table is a challenge.

Balancing act

“Joshua is a great eater, but he’s not at the stage where he can understand that he has to have his dinner first before getting crisps,” said Gillian, who lives in Cork city with husband Owen. ‘He can get mad when I tell him he can’t have the crisps. I try to persevere and distract him by doing something else. But there are also days when I give in.”

Overall, Gillian is happy with what Joshua eats. He loves wheat cereal or rice crispies, sausages, toast, grapes, yogurt, fruit juices, though he’s not too keen on milk. The only time he gets finicky is at lunch, where he might have a banana or fish fingers and beans, or nothing at all.

Older sister Megan is not a morning person and Gillian does her best to try to get her to eat, at the very least, a yogurt before she leaves the house. “I hate to see her going out in the morning without something to eat, but she tells me she’s not hungry. She has a sandwich and yoghurt at school and crisps and sweets aren’t allowed in school, so I know she’s not eating them there.”

“I try not to bring too much junk food into the house, as much for my own sake as theirs.”

Gillian admits that she does buy crisps and sugary lemonade. “However, I don’t buy the fun-sized bars and I try not to bring too much junk food into the house, as much for my own sake as theirs. When you look at how much a pack of fun-sized bars costs and how much fruit you could buy for the same price, I’d rather spend my money on the fruit.”

At dinner time Megan and Joshua eat together with Gillian in the kitchen, while shift-worker Owen eats later when he gets home from work. “Megan loves milk and she’ll eat a good plate of veg; she eats chicken and might eat steak, but she won’t touch lamb chops, pork chops, lamb’s liver or fish. She associates them with the animals and she won’t go near them, though she will eat spaghetti bolognaise and chicken casserole.”

Even though the television is on in the kitchen while they eat, Gillian, who works part-time, finds it’s more a distraction for her than the children. “I’ll have the television on while I’m cooking and it’s left on while we eat. I’ll be watching the News and commenting on it while trying to get the children to finish their dinner.”

Read what the expert says on page 6.
Let’s Get Physical

The golden rule in business is that ‘you maximise the resources you already have’ and that’s exactly what the McQuade family in Newtownforbes, Co Longford try to do.

Mum Nuala walks four miles most days along the country roads surrounding this picturesque little village, with youngest son Colin (13), sometimes joining her. Ross (16) plays gaelic football and hurling with the local teams.

But, as with a lot of rural areas, there’s not a lot of choice available. The nearest swimming pool or gym is in Longford or Rooskey, some miles away; Colin used to love playing basketball, but that’s no longer available and he has no interest in gaelic football or hurling. Dad Seamus works as a builder in England and is busy renovating the family home, so he’s not short of exercise!

Nuala brings the importance of exercise right into the heart of the home, and the teenagers, including oldest daughter Dara (17), and Nuala herself, all take turns on a stepper.

But, just as happens other teenagers, exams and homework can get in the way. “Dara used to play hockey in Longford, but she didn’t do as much sport in the past year while she was doing her Leaving Cert. Ross was doing his Junior Cert, but he still kept on the hurling and football.”

Colin probably loses out more than Ross because there’s little else for him in the locality when he’s not interested in hurling or football. “He does whatever he does in PE in school and that’s about it,” said Nuala. He went to Irish college during July where diverse activities such as canoeing and mountain climbing were on offer. “He loves doing all that, but not hurling and football, which is all that’s here.”

But Nuala makes sure they have plenty of activity around the house. “They each tidy the room ‘to my satisfaction’, as I have to remind them! And they take turns each week to tidy the house and to mow the lawn, which takes about two hours.”

Read what the expert says on page 8.

Dara McQuade (17) has had her hands full in the past year, studying for her Leaving Cert.

Interested in different sports, she’s still searching for one that will hold her interest. “Last year, I started gaelic football and athletics, but I got bored and stopped. In school, we could do PE or a study class. I had so much work to do and so much homework that I took the study class. I started aerobics while in school, but that stopped because there wasn’t enough interest.”

Her two favourite activities to date were hockey and horseriding, but both fell by the wayside around the time of her Junior Cert. “I was left at a loss after finishing hockey, it really gets you going.

But Moyne, where I went to school, is far from where I live and by the time I got home and had homework to do…”

“I walk up the village to a friend’s house and I go on the stepper here at home, but I’m not involved in anything now. The choice isn’t very varied around here. If you’re not into running around a pitch, there’s nothing else to do.”

Dara is hoping to secure a place in university to pursue occupational therapy. “I’d like to get into aerobics or modern dance, but it depends on how much time I have. I want to find something that will hold my interest.”
Gillian doing a Great Job

In the Higgins family (page 4), the emphasis is on trying to ensure that everyone enjoys a varied and balanced diet, although this is sometimes easier said than done. Gillian is the gatekeeper and, as a parent, she controls the availability and type of meals and snacks in the home. It’s a good idea to include choices from the four main food groups and to use the Food Pyramid as a guide to healthy portion sizes.

Despite the crisps, Joshua enjoys healthy snack options such as fruit and breakfast cereals. If he takes his cereal with milk and is eating cheese and yogurt, Gillian need not worry that he doesn’t drink milk. As Joshua grows, Gillian can encourage him to have three servings from the dairy shelf of the Food Pyramid every day to ensure he meets his calcium needs.

As children have small stomachs, they need small regular meals and snacks to keep them going. So it’s great that Gillian encourages Megan to eat some breakfast. Eating something before going to school really helps your child’s concentration, memory and helps them to get full benefit from the school lessons.

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Breakfast is so important for children. Eating something before going to school really helps their concentration, memory and helps them to get full benefit from the school lessons.

The Fruity Habit

✓ Slice an apple or banana over your child’s cereal in the morning
✓ Munching an apple while walking to school or waiting for the bus keeps boredom at bay!
✓ Add homemade strawberry jam to bread, toast or scones as a between-meal snack
✓ Juice counts - a small glass of orange, grapefruit or apple juice counts as one portion of fruit or veg
✓ Liquidise fruit and add to yogurts, milkshakes, smoothies or as a topping for an ice-cream treat
✓ Fruit salads make a delicious dessert... or snack... or breakfast. Chop up whatever fruit they like - mix tinned fruit in natural juice and fresh fruit – it tastes sweet and delicious.
✓ For extra colour and taste, instead of using plain water ice cubes, pour orange juice into an ice-cube tray and freeze. They’ll love the tangy taste!

Janis Morrissey, Dietitian
Irish Heart Foundation

expert's view

A publication by The Irish Heart Foundation | Page 6
Eoghan (8) comes fourth in the family, behind Elizabeth (15), Sarah (14), Jack (11), Thomas (4) and David (18 months) brings up the rear. Eoghan is a challenging eater, and Thomas is beginning to show signs of following in his big brother’s footsteps.

“They were both breast-fed as babies and were great eaters until they were about eight months. Then, it got steadily worse, particularly with Eoghan. For the last three years, his diet has broadly consisted of dry cereal in the mornings, dry crackers and water for lunch, bread rolls, burnt toast, burnt waffles, pancakes, peeled apples, strawberry yogurt, rice, pasta, chicken and sausage.

Eithne worries about the long-term impact Eoghan’s limited diet will have on his health.

“He would eat chips for breakfast, dinner and tea. If we go to a fast food restaurant, he’ll eat chicken nuggets and chips; he also loves chocolate and ice cream. He loves a milk and fruit juice drink, but I stopped buying it because I feel it’s high in sugar, so he only drinks water.

“At dinner time, neither he nor Thomas will sit at the dinner table. They just walk around the house eating their food. The older three are fine and eat a dinner when they come home from school,” said Eithne, who gave up work outside the home after Eoghan was born.

Over the years, she has tried everything from using stars as a motivation to letting Eoghan go hungry, then offering him a new food, but nothing works.

“One of his teachers had a healthy eating day because another child in the class was also a fussy eater. She asked me to send him in with a banana and a yogurt, but they came home again, all mashed together. He is stubborn. For instance, he will eat chocolate spread on a digestive biscuit, but if I put it on another biscuit, he won’t eat it.”

For all that, Eoghan is a bright, active child, though Eithne feels he’s paler in complexion than other children. “He was never on antibiotics until last year. He plays hurling and soccer, he’s co-operative in school, though I can’t understand how he can concentrate when all that’s in his lunchbox is dried crackers and water,” she said, adding that she worries about the long-term impact his limited diet will have on his health.

For a short time, she did add an iron supplement to his orange juice, but stopped it out of concern about adding supplements daily without medical advice.

Now, Thomas (4), is looking for the foods Eoghan eats, though Eithne is happy that he also eats grapes, apple, melon and raw carrot. But both children eat very little dairy products and Eithne feels constantly frustrated by their poor diets.

Read what the expert says on page 16.
Physical activity is a vital part of children’s health, according to Maura O’Sullivan-Ryan, Director of the National Certificate in Exercise & Fitness and Senior Facilitator on the Irish Heart Foundation’s Action for Life Programme in primary and secondary schools.

Did you know that physically active children have fewer chronic health problems than kids who are inactive? Children who develop good exercise habits early in life are more likely to be active as adults and active adults live longer.

Active children and adults have a much lower risk of developing problems like high blood pressure, too much ‘bad’ cholesterol and risk of heart attack and stroke. Physical activity also helps reduce risk of diabetes and cancer and bone disease.

Not only that, but children who are active are more rounded as individuals. They’re better able to meet the demands of daily living - they socialise better, they generally do better at school, they feel better about themselves and have more self-confidence.

It’s a natural instinct for children to be active but there are plenty of reasons why children’s activity levels fall. Television, computer games, DVDs, endless homework, busy parents, unsafe roads, a lack of playgrounds – they’re all obstacles to your child being more active.

Some parents find they are acting as unpaid taxis taking children to after-school activities, from soccer to swimming, boxing to basketball, camogie to dance … and that’s fantastic. But it is equally important to ensure that children build physical activity into everyday life, such as active play outdoors with friends, walking some of the way to school or the shops and taking part in PE at school.

It’s all about getting back to basics, getting the balance right - lots of activity, sport and play, healthy eating, monitored TV/video game time, balanced study/homework and, last but not least, rest and sleep.

A good example

The McQuade family (page 5) is a good example of active living. Helping with the housework and redecorating can be as beneficial for health as any other activity. It can help in building up the 60 minutes of activity children and young people need each day (and the minimum of 30 minutes

To do well in life, children must be healthy - physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.
that adults need). It also shows that activity can be built into our everyday lifestyle.

It is important that parents recognise that some children and young people may not enjoy team sports or the specific sport being provided in the school or local area. The main thing is to encourage participation in everything. For example it is great that Nuala and Seamus keep Ross busy helping out at home and also providing him with opportunities through summer activities. The local VEC might have outdoor pursuit courses, which Ross could consider after the summer.

Most people at some stage of life find that the habit of regular exercise is broken due to exam pressure, illness, work demands or a period of transition such as moving house. The important thing is to get back being active as soon as we can and at least not lose the activity we do as part of everyday chores.

For Dara this summer is a natural transition time. The good thing is that she has enjoyed different activities in the past and she is very clear about what she would like to try in the future. Some encouragement from her family and friends to take up the modern dance when she moves to Dublin will help her. For the short time Dara has left at home, Nuala may find the opportunity to encourage Dara to walk with her. Perhaps the family, including dad Seamus at weekends, could take up a short 4 week ‘Happy Heart’ challenge to do something together – kick a football or go for a walk with small prizes for completing the challenge!

And finally PE … so important for all students, but especially at Leaving Cert many students find that the hour of PE in the week gives them a relaxing break from study and refreshes and energises them for further study.

Maura O’Sullivan Ryan, Director, National Certificate in Exercise and Fitness

How much is enough?

Children should be active for at least one hour every day. This may not necessarily happen in one session, but could be broken up into 15 minutes active play at school break, 30 minutes bike riding after school and 15 minutes dancing or playing soccer with friends in the evening.

A is for Active

- Mum and Dad are the best motivators. Set a good example – introduce your kids to activity that’s fun. Take a bit of time at least one evening a week or at weekends when everyone is more relaxed – go walking, biking, dancing, swimming. Puck a sliotar, play badminton in the back garden or play tag in the local park.

- Finding time can be difficult but concentrate on the positive aspects of exercise. It’s a chance for a family to be together, to share good times and fun.

- Praise your children for taking part and for effort. Avoid too much competition - not everyone can win.

- Encourage your child to be outdoors.

- Encourage your child to be independent as young as possible – ask them to make their own bed, get themselves drinks, and tidy up after themselves.

- Walk with your child to and from school, the shops or local video shop.

- Limit the amount of time your child can spend watching TV and video games.

- Support sport. Allow children to try out different sports so that they can develop a variety of skills and find activities that they like.

For more information on getting your child active read the Irish Heart Foundation’s ‘Get Kids on the Go’ from www.irishheart.ie or by phoning 1850 364 364
Use the Food Pyramid to plan your choices every day and watch your health.

Choose very small amounts:

Choose any 2

Choose any 3
(Teenagers/Young People need 5 Servings)

Choose any 5

Choose any 6+

Drink water regularly - at least 8 cups a day.

FOLIC ACID - AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT IN MAKING A BABY. YOU CAN GET FOLIC ACID FROM FERMENTED FOODS. IF YOU BECOME PREGNANT THEN YOU SHOULD BE TAKING A FOLIC ACID TABLET (400 MICROGRAMS PER DAY).
Healthy Food Portion Size

Fats/Sugar Snacks, Foods and Drinks
- choose fats high in monounsaturates or polyunsaturates. Limit fried foods to 1-2 times a week. Amounts of high fat/sugar snacks and drinks and not too often.

Meat, Fish, Eggs & Alternatives
- use lean cuts of meats. Eat oily fish.

Milk, Cheese & Yogurt
- choose low fat varieties.

Fruit & Vegetables
- choose green leafy vegetables and citrus fruit frequently. Fruit juice only counts for one serving, each day.

Bread, Cereals & Potatoes
- eat these foods at each meal – high fibre is best.
**Tea Time Scramble**

A quick and economical snack the kids will love. Serves 3.

**What you need**
- 3 eggs
- 2 dessertspoons of milk
- 5g / 1/4 oz polyunsaturated margarine
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 50g / 2oz cooked ham, chopped
- 50g / 2oz cheddar cheese, grated
- 3 slices of toast
- Parsley to garnish (optional)

**What you do**
Beat eggs and milk together and pour into a saucepan. Add margarine, chopped tomato and ham, grated cheese and seasoning. Cook over a low heat until creamy, stirring all the time. Spoon equal portions on to the toast. Sprinkle with chopped parsley and serve hot.

*Recipe adapted from “101 Square Meals” - Mid Western Health Board and Limerick Money Advice & Budgeting Service*

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**3 Bean Casserole**

A handy standby meal with lots of protein and fibre and a cheap substitute for meat-based dishes. Serves 6.

**What you need**
- 1 onion
- 1/2 clove of garlic
- 1/2 tablespoon of pure vegetable oil
- 1 can of baked beans
- 1 can of butter beans
- 1 can of kidney beans
- 1 can tomatoes (optional)

**What you do**
Chop the onion and garlic and cook gently in the vegetable oil until soft. Add all cans of beans and tomatoes and simmer for 5-10 minutes.

Serve with potatoes or crusty bread.

*Note: Tomatoes or any vegetables can be added to give more flavour and colour.*
Easy Bolognais Sauce

An ideal dish for hiding vegetables. Chutney and ketchup make this sweeter for children.

Serves 4.

What you need
- 450g / 1 lb lean mince beef
- 2 cloves of garlic, chopped
- 15ml / 1 tablespoon tomato purée
- 1 pepper, seeded and chopped
- 2 small onions, sliced
- 5 large mushrooms, washed, chopped
- 15ml / 1 tablespoon of mango chutney (optional)
- 15ml / 1 tablespoon of tomato ketchup (optional)
- 5 fresh tomatoes, quartered
- A handful of sultanas or grated carrots
- 15ml / 1 tablespoon of fresh chopped basil to garnish (optional)

What you do
Place the beef and garlic in saucepan over a moderate heat. Cook until beef is browned and drain off the fat. Add the onion, pepper, mushrooms and mix well. Add tomato puree, chutney and ketchup, mix well. Add the chopped tomatoes and sultanas or grated carrot. Cook over low heat for about 45 minutes.

Recipe adapted from Rollercoaster

Chicken Dipping Fingers

A healthier version of a favourite! Serves 6.

What you need
- 5 skinless chicken breasts cut into strips
- 250g / 10oz flour
- 500g / 20oz fresh breadcrumbs
- 500g / 20oz oats
- 2 eggs beaten
- 1 - 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- A little salt and black pepper

What you do
Mix flour, breadcrumbs, oats and seasoning together. Place chicken strips in beaten eggs. Take each piece of chicken and roll it in the dry mixture. Place on a floured plate until they need cooking.

Heat a little oil in a frying pan. Add each strip and seal on all sides (this is done by turning each side quickly in a very hot pan). When sealed, reduce heat and cook for 20 - 25 minutes depending on size of chicken pieces. Delicious served with a barbecue sauce.

A baked potato on the side goes down well with these fingers.

Recipe adapted from “Food and Diet – Focus on Children’s Food” leaflet by Superquinn
It’s not a war

Many young children go through phases of being faddy or fussy eaters. It’s often an attempt to get attention and escalates at the same pace as your anxiety! Don’t panic, as even limited diets for a few weeks can deliver all the nutrients your child needs. A varied diet can be achieved over the course of a day or even a week. Time, encouragement and patience (yours, mostly) will produce gradual but significant improvements.

Shopping
Only buy the foods you want them to eat. If favourite foods are not in the house, over time they will eat what’s available.

Encourage your child to help with shopping and preparing meals.

Food
Food should not be a reward for good behaviour or a punishment for bad. It’s not a substitute for time and attention nor a pacifier to calm an angry, tired or bored child.

Healthy snacks are important for children as they have small stomachs and need small frequent meals. Avoid filling them up with sugary, fizzy drinks before a meal.

When they come in from school, have a bowl of low-sugar and non-chocolate flavoured cereal and milk or a slice of brown bread or a soft roll with mashed banana available. These handy healthy snacks will keep them going until dinnertime.

Children love finger food. Sticks of raw carrot, slices of apple or any fruit that they like; cherry or halved tomatoes are a good way to get them to eat fruit and vegetables and may be preferred than cooked vegetables.

So your child won’t eat fruit and veg?

Try...
- Blending vegetables into soups, stews, pasta sauces
- Stewed fruit in yogurt
- Mashed cauliflower or turnip in mashed potato
- Tin of tomatoes in mince meat
- Roast parsnip with roast potatoes or wedges
- Freezing orange juice in ice cube containers with a cocktail stick
- Frozen vegetables, such as carrots, peas and sweetcorn mixture - they contain all the nutrients of fresh vegetables and provide great colour
- Extra topping on pizza such as mandarin, pineapple or mushroom.

Mealtimes
Try to eat together as a family as often as possible and lavish praise if your child tries something new.

Avoid making mealtimes a power struggle. If you battle over your child’s eating, he/she will stop eating to demonstrate his/her willpower.

Avoid negotiating with your child about food choices e.g. ‘Will you eat eggs?’ If your child doesn’t like boiled eggs, try them scrambled or in an omelette with different fillings.

Never say: ‘If you finish your dinner, you can have some biscuits/sweets’. This encourages the notion that the main course is something to be endured while sweets are the ‘prize’ worth waiting for.

It’s got a name! Food neophobia is an unwillingness to try new foods. If your child is afraid to try, say, chicken, keep offering it to him, either cooked or presented in different ways, so that he gets over his fear of it. If he doesn’t eat it the first time or the fifth time, don’t panic. It can take up to 10 tries before a child will try something new.

If your child refuses to eat, accept it with more grace than you feel! Remove his plate but do not offer a replacement food until the next mealtime.
Keep portions small or buy smaller dinner plates so that the amount of food on offer isn’t intimidating.

Invite a friend – with a good appetite – for dinner and offer the same food to both. Your child may be more tempted to eat whatever his friend is eating.

Encourage your child to realise when they are full. This may mean not telling them to always clear their plate. This is important as they may lose their natural ability to regulate their appetite and not recognise when they’re full. This can lead to eating a little more than needed at every meal, which over time leads to overweight.

### Colourful pictures with food appeal to children

- Smiley face pictures – cut out ham shapes as eyes, nose and mouth on a child’s mini pizza.
- Vegetable shapes on a round slice of chicken, turkey/ ham or cheese – for example cucumber rings as eyes, raw carrot triangle as nose and tomato wedge as mouth.
- Shapes like boats and castles are also easy to make - and they can be very simple shapes - just call them a boat / castle and children’s imaginations will do the rest!
- Mention the current popular children’s character and how they love this food - and see what happens!

Good nutrition is not just about putting food on the table, it is a very complex and emotional topic. If, like Eithne, on page 7 you are faced daily with a child who will not accept the nutritious food you are so willing to give them, you will feel frustrated, stressed and powerless.

Toddlers do go through a stage of development where power struggles rule the day – not called the terrible 2’s for nothing! For example, today, little Johnny will only eat wheat cereal and juice; tomorrow, it may be something different, or he may stick with his cereal and juice for weeks. While the habits of fussy eating usually appear in the pre-school years, some children will continue to pose challenges in terms of their eating habits well beyond the pre-school years.

- The general advice of keeping mealtimes relaxed is very good advice.
- While it is important that your child does try new foods, parents of a faddy eater have to be very careful not to get too obsessed by this. (To ensure that key nutrients are included refer to the section across for ideas)
- It’s a good idea to look at and list all the foods your child will eat, which is usually more than you think, and develop menu plans around these.
- Another area that can affect eating habits is the child’s senses. When it comes to food, some children will look for very strong-tasting food and will really enjoy spicy foods, other children will like very bland foods.
- The texture of the food is also another factor – one child may enjoy crunchy, chewy food while another will much prefer smooth, almost puréed, food. Parents will have to adjust what they offer their child based on these preferences.

Anne O’Connor
Child Clinical Psychologist
www.rollercoaster.ie, parenting website

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a publication by The Irish Heart Foundation | Page 15
Janis Morrissey, Dietitian, Irish Heart Foundation congratulates Eithne (page 7), who gave her children a great start in life by breastfeeding them. Children who have been breastfed have lower cholesterol and blood pressure levels and are less likely to be obese as adults.

Despite the limited range of Eoghan’s diet, it does include foods from each of the main food groups of the Food Pyramid. The overall pattern of food over a period of time is more important than the contents of one meal. It would be a good idea to cook toast and waffles until they’re golden rather than browned or burnt. Burnt cereal foods like toast and potato waffles can contain a toxin called acrylamide, which is thought to cause cancer.

**HEALTHY SNACK IDEAS**

- Chunks of raw vegetables and fruit
- A small sandwich
- Yogurt or fromage frais
- Dried fruit
- Dry roasted nuts *(not for under 5s)*
- Scone or bagel
- Plain popcorn
- Cheese cubes or fingers
- Bread/toast and jam or peanut butter
- Breakfast cereal and milk
- Crackers

**SO YOUR CHILD WON’T DRINK MILK?**

Try...

- A bowl of breakfast cereal with milk
- Cheese on crackers
- Fruit salad with yogurt
- A mug of hot chocolate
- A slice of pizza or lasagne
- A fruit smoothie or milkshake
- Baked potato with grated cheese
- Custard or milk pudding
- A toasted cheese sandwich
- Macaroni cheese or cheesy pasta bake
- Cheese slices, triangles or strings
- Chunks of cheese in crispy salad
- Fish with white sauce
- Muesli with natural yogurt
- A cheese board with crackers and fruit
**Mexican Eggs in the Pan**

A simple tasty dish which is popular with older children and teenagers. Serves 4.

**What you need**
- 20ml / 1 1/2 tablespoons pure vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 8 ripe tomatoes, chopped
- 5-6 scallions, chopped
- 1 chilli, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 3g / 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- Pinch of sugar
- A little salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 eggs
- A tablespoon coriander, chopped (optional)

**What you do**
1. Heat the olive oil in a frying pan. Sauté the onion until golden. Add the tomatoes, scallions and chilli and cook gently for 5-6 minutes. Add the garlic, cumin, sugar and seasoning. Break an egg in each quarter of the pan and continue cooking until the eggs are just the way you like them. Sprinkle with the chopped coriander (if desired) and serve with warm tortilla bread or pitta bread.

**Recipe adapted from “An Egg a Day is OK” leaflet – Bord Bia, Clanwilliam Court, Lr Mount Street, Dublin 2, www.bordbia.ie**

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**Fun Sandwiches**

Presentation is very important to children and sandwiches don’t have to be boring!

**What you need**
Your child’s favourite sandwich ingredients

**What you do**
1. Assemble the ingredients
2. Using fun shaped pastry cutters, cut sandwiches into shapes to fit the occasion.
   (e.g. Valentine’s – hearts; Christmas – Christmas trees, holly, stars)

**Note:** You could also try using letter cut outs and spelling your child’s name for an impressive edible platter.

**Sandwiches with a twist**
1. Remove the crusts from a slice of bread.
2. Spread with a small amount of mild spreadable cheese or polyunsaturated margarine.
3. Add a slice of ham or other fillings depending on child’s tastes.
4. Fold the sandwich lengthways into a roll.
5. Wrap in clingfilm and leave in the fridge overnight.
6. Before placing in the lunchbox next day, cut into thin slices and rewrap with clingfilm.

**Recipe adapted from Rollercoaster**
Baked Potato Fillings

Potatoes are a very nutritious and versatile food. Bake potatoes either in the oven or the microwave for a delicious snack at any time of day. Don’t forget to add in your child’s favourite raw or salad vegetables. If your child likes a ‘creamy’ topping use low-fat creme fraiche or greek style yogurt. Try some of these tasty fillings:

Coleslaw
Use a food processor or grater to create shreds of carrot and white cabbage (which you can buy in quarters). Add a little mayonnaise and season with a little salt and black pepper.

Bean and Bacon
Heat baked beans and chopped tomato, mixed with lean, crisp, grilled bacon bits.

Pizza-style
Heat finely chopped green pepper, mushroom and onion mixed with a spoonful of tomato pasta sauce. Top with low fat grated cheddar cheese and grill until melted.

Taco-style
Fill with shredded lettuce, chopped tomato and scallions and top with low fat grated cheese.

Tuna and Bacon
Mix a small tin of tuna and grilled lean bacon bits with scooped out potato and season to taste. Return mixture to potato skins. Season with a little salt and black pepper.

Recipes adapted from “101 Square Meals” - Mid Western Health Board and Limerick Money Advice & Budgeting Service
Cooking and kids

Cooking and baking can be fun. Fun for you - and fun for your child. Yet, they’re activities that seem to have been lost in the rush to get a dinner on the table when you’ve rushed in the door from work or collecting your children from soccer, basketball or music lessons.

Taking time out at weekends to make a pizza from dough or mixing ingredients until you turn something vaguely resembling scones can be a wonderful way to engage a child’s five senses: seeing, touching, tasting, smelling and - hearing you laugh!

“Food needn’t be difficult,” said chef Michael Swan, who teaches professional cookery to catering students at Fáilte Ireland’s headquarters in Dublin. “If you teach a child how to boil an egg, they’ll be able to boil potatoes and any kind of vegetable down the line.”

Another neat trick is to line up fresh and processed produce. Get your children to close their eyes and taste the difference between fresh and processed chicken, grilled and tinned tomatoes, fresh and tinned pineapple.

“Cooking is all about interacting,” said Michael, adding that baking apple tarts with his baker dad was all part of his childhood. “Messing with ingredients is important, even if the scones turn out to be a disaster. A bag of flour doesn’t cost a lot. And it’s all about making children aware of what goes into food so they’re confident enough to choose salad and fruit juice when they’re out with their friends.”

Not only will cooking and baking improve your child’s hand-eye co-ordination and measuring skills, but you’ll be able to take a night off cooking. “A very simple meal for a child or teenager to put together is chicken stir-fry and rice, followed by fruit salad,” said Michael, adding that children will put a value on healthy eating if that is the message they receive from their parents. “Behaviour breeds behaviour.”

Easy things to try:

- **Pancakes**: With sweet or savoury fillings e.g. ham and cheese
- **Bruchetta**: Baguette with tomato sauce, chopped tomatoes and a little grated cheese
- **Baked potato**: With grated carrot, white cabbage and a little mayonnaise
- **Apple tarts**: Rub butter through flour, add water, sugar, chopped apples

**CALORIES IN THE COOKING**

- **Takeaway Chips**: 910 Total Calories (heats 5g)
- **Oven Baked Chips**: 527 Total Calories (heats 14g)
- **Oven Baked Potato Wedges**: 627 Total Calories (heats 20g)
Recipe Ideas

Oatmeal Raisin Cookies

A healthy and tasty treat for Friday lunchboxes or birthday parties.

What you need
100g/ 4oz polyunsaturated margarine
75g / 3oz white sugar
75g / 3oz brown sugar
2 eggs
125g / 5oz wholemeal flour
125g / 5oz self raising white flour
150g / 6oz oatmeal
1 teaspoon sieved bread soda
75g / 3 oz raisins

What you do
Cream margarine and sugar together. Add eggs and mix well. Add remaining ingredients with raisins being added last. If mixture is too dry add a little milk to moisten and to make mixing easier. Form into balls and place on a lightly greased baking sheet. Flatten with a fork or your hand. Sprinkle with sesame seeds. Bake for 12 – 15 minutes at 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.

Recipe from “Cooking for Health” – Susan Higgins, The Kilkenny Health Project Ltd, 1992

Apple Crumble

An all-time family favourite. Perfect with rhubarb too.

What you need
3 cooking apples or 6 stalks of rhubarb
25g / 1oz sugar
3 dessertspoons water

Topping
180g / 6oz / flour
50g / 2oz caster sugar
50g / 2oz polyunsaturated margarine

What you do
Pre-heat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4. Put sliced apples, sugar and water in a saucepan and cook gently until they are soft. Place cooked fruit mixture in a pie dish. Sieve flour into a bowl. Rub in margarine. Add sugar and mix thoroughly. Sprinkle crumble mixture over fruit mixture. Bake in the pre-heated oven for 30 minutes. Use any low-fat yogurt or ice-cream as a topping, if desired.

Recipe adapted from “101 Square Meals” - Mid Western Health Board & Limerick Money Advice & Budgeting Service
So, how little salt should you have each day?
Adults should eat less than 6 grams of salt (one teaspoon) per day, children should eat much smaller amounts. School children should eat less than 4 grams of salt (half a teaspoon) per day and younger children should eat as little as possible.

Reduce these high salt foods
- Packet and tinned soups
- Instant noodles
- Ketchup and sauces
- Sausages and burgers
- Salty savoury snacks

Simple ways to cut down on salt
- Gradually reduce the amount of salt you add at the table and during cooking.
- Use alternative flavourings such as black pepper, herbs, spices, garlic and lemon juice.
- Limit the use of stock cubes, gravy granules and ready-made sauces. Try making homemade stock or sauces instead.
- Choose fresh vegetables and lean meat more often than tinned or processed varieties.
- If you do need to use ready meals on occasion, look for reduced salt options.
- Get out of the habit of having instant high - salt foods (listed above) at home. In fact do not even put them in your shopping basket!
Most parents know what foods to buy, but it’s very easy to be lulled into a false sense of well-being by claims such as ‘Fat Free’ or ‘Reduced Sugar’. Knowing how to read food labels and promotional health claims is essential to making healthy choices for your children. There is still a lot of variety in how food labels are written, however legislation from Europe will soon make labels a little easier to read. Many foods – especially convenience foods – carry some of the information below which can be a guide for you in choosing healthier foods.

The guidelines below on ‘reduced’ or ‘high’ levels of ingredients are set by the Food Standards Agency in the UK. Ireland does not yet have agreed standards.

### Calories – What you should know!

Calories – Energy in food is measured either in calories (kcal) or kilojoules (kJ). Kilojoules is the metric equivalent of calories. Most labels use calories. If you (or your child) eat more energy than you need for the amount of physical activity you do, you will become overweight.

- **‘Reduced Calorie’** 30% less calories than the standard product per 100g
- **‘Low Calorie’** Less than 40 calories per 100g

### Fat - What you should know!

Fats – also listed as butter, butter milk, dripping, lard, milk fat, vegetable oil, peanut oil, vegetable fat, glycerides.

Some labels may tell you if the fat is saturated, unsaturated or trans fat.

Saturated fats, refer mainly to animal fats - too much saturated fat in your diet can increase blood cholesterol.

Unsaturated fats, refer mainly to vegetable oils – also listed as monounsaturates and polyunsaturates and found in sunflower oil or olive oil.

Trans fats means that the fat, after high heat, has acquired the same properties as saturated fat and should be limited.

Eating too much fat, especially saturated and trans fat is linked with weight gain and obesity, high blood pressure and high cholesterol and increases your child’s risk of heart disease in later life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Lot</th>
<th>A Little per 100g (healthier levels)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fat</strong></td>
<td>20g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saturated Fats</strong></td>
<td>5g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Low Fat’</td>
<td>Less than 3g fat per 100g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘95% Fat Free’</td>
<td>Contains 5% fat (or 5g per 100g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Low in Saturates’</td>
<td>1.5g of Saturated Fats per 100g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Fibre - What you should know!

Fibre – vital to add bulk to your child’s diet.

Found in fruits, vegetables, pulses like beans and lentils, wholegrain bread and high-fibre breakfast cereals.

| A Lot per 100g (healthy levels) | 3g |
| A Little per 100g | 0.5g |
| ‘High Fibre’ | Contains at least 6g fibre per 100g |
| ‘Sources of Fibre’ | Contains at least 3g fibre per 100g |

A high fibre diet is not recommended for children under age 5.
Salt - What you should know!

Salt – also listed as sodium, sodium chloride, or monosodium glutamate (MSG), to name but a few.

To calculate the amount of salt in a food, simply multiply the amount of sodium by 2.5.

Eating too much salt can cause high blood pressure and lead to heart attack and strokes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Lot per 100g</th>
<th>3g sodium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Little per 100g (healthier levels)</td>
<td>0.5g sodium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Reduced Sodium'</td>
<td>30% less sodium than the standard product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Low Sodium'</td>
<td>Less than 0.01g per 100g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See page 21 for more information on salt.

Sugar - What you should know!

Sugars – also listed as sucrose, glucose, glucose syrup, golden syrup, maple syrup, treacle, invert sugar, honey, fructose, dextrose, maltose.

Sugary foods don’t satisfy appetite as well as other foods. They are high in calories and are linked to excess weight, Type 2 diabetes and dental decay. General healthy eating guidelines encourage a balance of foods across all food groups based on the Food Pyramid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Lot per 100g</th>
<th>10g</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Little per 100g (healthier levels)</td>
<td>2g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Reduced Sugar’ | 30% less sugars than the standard product per 100g |
‘No Added Sugar’ | No sugars have been added, but the product may contain natural sugars |
‘Low Sugar’ | Less than 5g sugar per 100g |

Additives – What you should know!

All additives to food are given E numbers for reference, which assure us that additives are safe to eat in food. Additives are used to preserve a product properly or to enhance the look and flavour of the product. E162 for instance is the natural red colouring from beetroot. Some of the most common E numbers, found mainly in junk food, may affect behaviour in a very small number of children.

(Source: Guide to Food Labelling, British Heart Foundation & Food Labelling, Community Nutrition and Dietetic Service, Western Health Board, Galway)
WHO CAN I ASK FOR HELP?

Irish Heart Foundation
Lo call 1850 364 364 www.irishheart.ie
Healthy eating, physical activity, losing weight, quitting smoking, resuscitation and all aspects of heart disease and stroke.

LOCAL INFORMATION
For more information on events or organisations in your area contact local health promotion department, Health Services Executive, local authority (Play Development Officer), local community centres, leisure centres, the library or local newspapers.

Health Service Executive – Health Promotion Departments

Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary South, Waterford, Wexford - Dean St, Kilkenny – 056 7761400

Cavan, Louth, Meath and Monaghan - Railway St, Navan, Co. Meath – 046 9076400 and St Brigid's Complex, Ardee, Co. Louth – 041 6856994

Clare, Limerick and Tipperary North - Parkview House, Pery St, Limerick – 061 483215

Cork, Kerry - Eye, Ear & Throat Hospital, Western Road, Cork – 021 4921641

Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo - Saimer Court, Main St, Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal – 071 9852000

Dublin North - 3rd Floor, Park House, 191-197 North Circular Road, Dublin 7 – 01 8823414

Dublin South East, Wicklow – Block B, Civic Centre, Main St, Bray, Co. Wicklow – 01 2744360

Dublin West, Kildare and West Wicklow – 3rd floor, 52 Broomhill Road, Tallaght, Dublin 24 – 01 4632800

Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath - Unit 4, Central Business Park, Clonminch, Portlaoise Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly – 0506 57800

Galway, Mayo, Roscommon - West City Centre, Seamus Quirke Road, Galway – 091 548321/548322

USEFUL WEBSITES

Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute
www.indi.ie
General healthy eating for all age groups and for specific nutrition related illnesses.

Bord Iascaigh Mhara
(Irish Sea Fisheries Board)
www.bim.ie
Information and recipes for fish as part of a healthy balanced diet.

Bord Bia (Irish Food Board)
www.bordbia.ie
Nutrition advice and great recipes.

Irish Sports Council
www.irishsportscouncil.ie
Contact point for individual sports and disability sports organisations and to the 16 Local Sports Partnerships who co-ordinate and promote the development of sport in local areas.

Sugradh
www.playireland.ie
Advice on play and play opportunities for children and advice on developing playgrounds and play services.

Special Olympics
www.specialolympics.ie
A year-round sports training and competition programme for children with a learning disability in a variety of Olympic-type sports.

National Certificate in Exercise and Fitness
www.ncefinfo.com
Useful guidelines on various aspects of exercise and fitness for children.

National Youth Council of Ireland
www.nyci.ie
Programmes and projects organised for young people; key issues affecting young people and youth organisations.

Rollercoaster
www.rollercoaster.ie
Tips on parenting, lifestyle issues, recipes and a discussion board to share ideas with other parents.

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