



Eat Smart Sheffield Newsletter - for Parents/Carers

Welcome to your Eat Smart Sheffield Newsletter!

You may have heard of Eat Smart Sheffield - in fact, there's a good chance you already follow us on social media... or you may have seen us in our regular feature every Monday in The Star newspaper...

In a nutshell, we are here to help and support pupils, their families and the wider community to adopt healthier eating behaviours, encouraging good food choices and healthier lifestyles for all.

We believe everyone should have the confidence, skills and knowledge they need to cook, grow and enjoy good quality affordable food, as well as an understanding of important food issues such as nutrition, food sources and sustainability.

We work with all primary, secondary and special schools across the city and encourage them to work towards a Food for Life Award which is a great way to demonstrate that they are doing fantastic work in

providing healthy school meals, great lunchtimes and food education for all our children and young people.

*If you'd like to know more or to find out if your school is involved, feel free to contact **Lisa Aldwin, Eat Smart Sheffield Programme Manager**: lisa.aldwin@learnsheffield.co.uk*



Making healthy eating a normal part of life is the best way you can help your child to maintain or achieve a healthy weight, for a longer, healthier life. Although schools play a big part in this, you as parents/carers have a huge role in ensuring your children have a balanced diet, are getting the nutrients they need, and are developing good lifestyle habits so they can grow, thrive and live life to the full.

We know this isn't always easy and many factors affect what we eat, how and why, so Eat Smart Sheffield are here to help! We've pulled together some top tips for healthy eating throughout the day which we hope you will find useful...

Breakfast

Start the day the right way - have a healthy breakfast!



Children who have a healthy, nutritious breakfast have been found to have improved reading, writing & maths results, and have better levels of concentration & behaviour.

And eating breakfast has many health benefits for us all, including:

- Providing energy
- Improving brain function
- Helping maintain a healthy weight
- Reducing the risk of diabetes, heart disease & high blood pressure

We all know mornings can be hectic but it's really important to have breakfast if you can.

Some schools offer FREE breakfasts too so be sure to ask your school for more information.

Healthy breakfast options include:

- **Low sugar cereals** such as muesli, porridge, Weetabix or Shredded Wheat
- **Toast** – brown, wholemeal or 50/50 bread instead of white is healthier as these contain more fibre
- **Crumpet** or **Bagel** - a nice alternative to bread!
- **Low-fat natural yogurt** or **Greek yogurt** - you could add muesli, fruit, nuts or seeds for added taste & texture
- **Eggs** - try them poached, boiled or scrambled, or why not make an omelette?
- **Pancakes** - add fruit such as strawberries or blueberries or make them savoury by adding mushrooms or tomatoes - that way you'll be getting one of your 5-a-day too!

For more information about Healthy Breakfasts, [check out our factsheet here](#).

Lunchtime

School Meals



Lunch time is an important part of a child's school day, giving them a break with friends and the chance to recharge their batteries ready for the afternoon's activities.

Children who eat a well-balanced lunch are more likely to have better concentration levels in the afternoon, improving their learning, behaviour and health.

We believe school meals are the best option.

Here are some other reasons why:

- **Quality Meal Provision** - School menus have to meet the Government School Food Standards which ensure meals are healthy, balanced and nutritious. Schools use fresh, high-quality ingredients with lots of choice and variety. Special dietary needs can also be catered for.
- **Great Value** – School meals are a cost-effective way of ensuring your child has a 2-course, healthy balanced meal and **many children are entitled to FREE School Meals, so make sure you take them if you are!** Find out if you're eligible by either asking your school, contacting Sheffield City Council or applying online at: <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/utilities/form/schools-and-childcare/free-school-meals-start>

Remember, ALL children in Reception, Year 1 & Year 2 are eligible for Free School Meals regardless of status.

- **Convenience** - School meals save you time and effort (no packed lunches to sort!) so is one less job for busy parents/carers to do!

- **Social skills** – School meals provide the opportunity to further develop social skills as children sit down with friends to enjoy their meals and try new food. They also encourage healthy eating habits, good table manners and the use of cutlery.

Packed Lunches



Unfortunately, unlike school meals, there are no School Food Standards for packed lunches brought in from home and worryingly, recent research found that 82% contain unhealthy snacks such as chocolate or sweets, 61% contained sugar sweetened drinks such as fizzy pop or milkshakes, and 60% contained savoury snacks high in fat and salt, such as crisps.

We believe that school meals are the best lunchtime option but if you do want to provide your child with a packed lunch, try to keep them as healthy and nutritious as possible.

Ideally, a packed lunch should contain:

- 1) A portion of bread (or similar), rice, potatoes or pasta
- 2) Plenty of fruit & vegetables
- 3) A portion of dairy or a calcium rich alternative (eg. cheese, yogurt)
- 4) Some protein (eg. beans, pulses, fish, egg, meat)
- 5) A healthy drink

You should try to avoid including foods and drinks that are high in fat, sugar and/or salt as too much of these are bad for our health, and are often made up of 'empty calories', providing no nutrients such as vitamins, minerals or fibre. Lots of pre-packaged, 'lunch box' items are expensive too - and not great for the environment with all their packaging!

What About Treats?



It is fine to add an extra treat on occasion – maybe once a week. Given too often and it won't be seen as 'special'. You should still try to make sure it is a healthier choice if possible.

Some good options include:

✓ *A slice of malt loaf or banana bread, a teacake or low sugar flapjack / cereal bar, rice pudding pot or sugar-free jelly*

✓ *Unsalted pretzels, plain popcorn, seeds, rice or corn cakes with cream cheese, crackers & cheese, vegetable or bread sticks with a dip*

And remember, treats don't have to be food – why not add a little note, sticker or joke in the lunchbox to make your little one smile instead?

For more information, packed lunch ideas, and tips on how to save time & money, check out our Healthy Packed Lunch Guidance at:

<https://www.learnsheffield.co.uk/Downloads/Partnerships/Eat-Smart-Sheffield/Eat%20Smart%20Sheffield%20Packed%20Lunch%20Guidance.pdf>

Snacks



Snacks can provide energy for our activities through the day as well as provide valuable nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, protein & fibre. However, snacks can be a source of extra fat, sugar and salt so choose wisely, go for healthier options, and keep portion sizes sensible!

Fruit and vegetables are the best snack options, helping you get to your all-important 5-a-day.

At school, ALL children in Reception & Key Stage 1 (Year 1 & Year 2) receive a FREE piece of fruit or vegetable everyday as part of the Government's School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme.

If your school allows snacks to be brought in from home, they should be healthy too. For example:

- Fruit (eg. an apple, a banana, a satsuma)
- Vegetables (eg. a carrot, cucumber sticks, slices of pepper)
- Dried fruits (eg. raisins, dried apricots, dried cranberries)
- Plain Crackers / Breadsticks / Rice Cakes

Drinks



Sugary drinks including fizzy pop, milkshakes, sports drinks and sweetened, flavoured water are the biggest source of sugar for children. These are bad for our health, contributing to both weight gain and tooth decay.

- Water is always the best option - and the cheapest! **Schools must provide FREE drinking water throughout the day.**
- Milk is the next best option - stick to semi-skimmed or skimmed for anyone over 5 years of age.
- One small glass (150ml) of fruit juice or smoothie counts as one of your 5-a-day. However, although they have lots of vitamins & minerals, they also contain lots of sugar so just stick to one small glass a day.
- Sugar free or diet fizzy drinks are better than those with sugar in. However, many of them contain acids which are harmful to teeth so still need to be limited.
- Energy drinks (e.g. Lucozade, Red Bull, Monster) contain caffeine as well as lots of sugar and are not suitable for children.

Family Mealtimes

Family meals are important and should be part of our daily lives



We know this is not easy and not always possible, but if we can, we should all try to:

- Have 3 meals a day (plus max. 2 snacks)
- Eat together (ideally at a table or wherever works for your family)
- Eat at regular times
- Have screen-free mealtimes

There are many benefits to this, including:

- Healthier & more varied food choices
- Improved academic performance
- Better family relationships

- Stronger mental health
- Weight management

It's also a really good idea to plan meals for the week ahead and to make a shopping list. This will save time, money and food waste.

Get the family involved too – despite what some children (and other halves!) might think, the family meal doesn't just appear on the table as if by magic! It has involved planning, shopping, prepping, cooking, setting the table, clearing the plates, washing up etc etc! Getting family members to help out where they can will make it less stressful as well as help build family relations. Children are also more likely to eat meals they have helped to create – win-win!

Family Recipe Ideas



If you are looking for some healthy, affordable meals, you'll find some popular recipes here. There's sure to be something to tempt you and your family! The 'Cooking on a Bootstrap' recipes by Jack Monroe are particularly fantastic during these times of financial worry, offering delicious recipes that anyone can make with basic ingredients and minimal kitchen equipment.

<https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes>

[Healthy and quick budget dishes - BBC Food](#)

[COOKING ON A BOOTSTRAP – by Jack Monroe, bestselling author of 'A Girl Called Jack'](#)

For all the latest updates, info, foodie facts and top tips, remember to follow us on our social media channels:

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