

A close-up photograph of a child in a blue shirt cracking a white egg into a clear glass bowl. An adult's hand is visible on the right, holding the bowl steady. The egg yolk is falling into the bowl. The background is softly blurred, showing a warm, indoor setting.

# Be Strong Family

All you need to know

[mybestrong.com](http://mybestrong.com)

**BE STRONG**

*Eat. Move. Live*

**At Be Strong we believe that healthy lifestyles are for the whole family. We want families all over the UK to be eating, moving and living healthily together.**

We think to have a healthy relationship with our bodies and our weight, everyone should understand that it is OK to weigh yourself occasionally, to hold yourself accountable and to keep a check on your weight. It is important that children understand that our weight corresponds to the food that we eat and the amount and frequency of exercise that we take part in. As long as there is no pre-occupation with weight, and no negativity associated with food or exercise, then this shouldn't descend into any unhealthy behaviours.

If you want to know whether your child is a healthy weight you can do so with the [NHS BMI calculator](#). This calculator takes in more information than the standard BMI Calculator for adults, as children have a different body composition than adults.



## Family Nutrition

Providing good nutrition for your family can be a minefield. With fussy eaters, our own working patterns and everybody's extra-curricular activities, it can sometimes be hard to provide a balanced meal that everyone enjoys, at the same time. It is also difficult to know how much is the right amount for our growing children.

### Calorie needs of a growing family

On average, men looking to maintain weight, need around 2500 calories, and women looking to maintain weight need around 2000 calories. You can get more specific [calorie information personalised for you](#) in the member centre. Relatively speaking though, children aged 6 and over need a higher amount of calories per kg of body weight than adults, this is because they are growing, so their bodies need more energy to keep up with the growing process.

Below are tables indicating, on average, how many calories, children aged 6-18 need. When you look at the figures, it might make you realise why you can't ever seem to fill your kids up!

(Reference: Caroline Walker Trust)

## Girls

Age	Activity	Calories
6 years	up to 60 minutes a day moderately strenuous activity	1620
9 years	up to 60 minutes a day moderately strenuous activity	1790
11 years	up to 60 minutes a day moderately strenuous activity	1870
11-14 years	up to 60 minutes a day moderately strenuous activity	1910
15-18 years	up to 60 minutes a day moderately strenuous activity	2100
6 years	about 2 hours a day moderately strenuous activity	1720
9 years	about 2 hours a day moderately strenuous activity	1970
11 years	about 2 hours a day moderately strenuous activity	2090
11-14 years	about 2 hours a day moderately strenuous activity	2460
15-18 years	about 2 hours a day moderately strenuous activity	2700

## Boys

Age	Activity	Calories
6 years	up to 60 minutes a day moderately strenuous activity	1810
9 years	up to 60 minutes a day moderately strenuous activity	1920
11 years	up to 60 minutes a day moderately strenuous activity	2070
11-14 years	up to 60 minutes a day moderately strenuous activity	2290
15-18 years	up to 60 minutes a day moderately strenuous activity	2530
6 years	about 2 hours a day moderately strenuous activity	1910
9 years	about 2 hours a day moderately strenuous activity	2160
11 years	about 2 hours a day moderately strenuous activity	2300
11-14 years	about 2 hours a day moderately strenuous activity	2940
15-18 years	about 2 hours a day moderately strenuous activity	3250



## What should we be feeding our families?

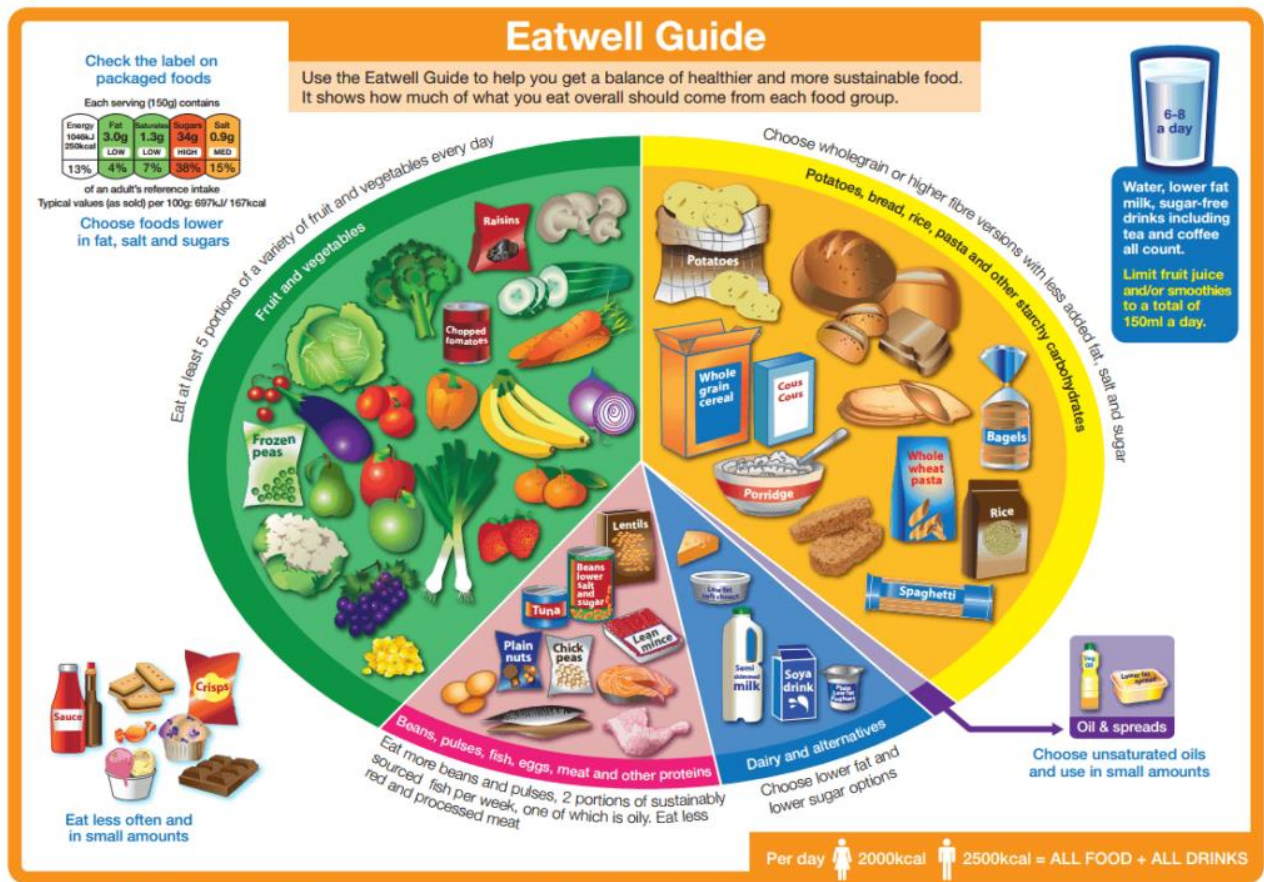
Ideally, meal times, wherever possible, should be a time when the whole family sits down together to chat about their day. However, we know that this can be nigh on impossible at times, due to individual family member's commitments. But it is a good idea to sit down at least once or twice a week, all together to share food and catch up with what everyone has been up to.

With regards to what we should eat, we need to make sure that our family meals are based upon the Eatwell Guide - which shows that:

- 38% of our diet should be starchy carbohydrates such as potatoes, pasta, rice, bread and cereals
- 40% of our diet should be vegetables and fruit,
- 12% should be protein-based foods such as meat, poultry, fish and pulses,
- 8% dairy based and dairy alternative foods such as milk, yogurt and cheese, or soya / nut-based alternatives
- 1% unsaturated oils and fats.

We should drink 6-8 glasses of water, lower fat milk or sugar free drinks each day.

High fat, salt and sugary snacks like crisps, biscuits, cakes and sweets should be eaten less often and in small amounts.



Our eating pattern should be made up of breakfast, lunch and dinner, with a mid-morning snack, mid afternoon snack and a snack before bed. It's better to try and keep the meal and snack times to the same time each

day. This reduces the need to snack erratically and in an uncontrolled way, and therefore consuming the wrong foods at the wrong times, making meal times with little ones more of a challenge.

## How much should we eat?

When producing meals and snacks, controlling portion sizes can be difficult.

If you are buying pre-prepared food, whether that is a take away or ready meal, buy them based upon the general calorie guidance of 2000 for women and 2500 for men.

- For women, this equates to a breakfast of 400 calories, lunch and dinner of 600 calories and total snacks of 400 calories.
- For men, this is a breakfast of 500 calories, lunch and dinner of 750 calories and total snacks 500 calories.

If you are trying to lose weight, then basing your foods on the calories that we have given you, in your [personalised nutrition information](#), is the way to ensure that you get the right portion sizes to lose weight. However, if you are just looking to maintain your weight and that of your family, sensible portion sizes, balancing your plate to make it look like the Eatwell Guide, and generally following the calorie information above will help to maintain your weight.

To access calorie information for common foods, have a look at our [calorie reference guide](#). It gives you calorie information in sensible portion sizes, so you can put a meal together yourself, and know how many calories it is going to be.

## Portion sizes

For Adults, we recommend the following as a guide for gauging portion sizes:

### **Starchy Carbohydrates - 1 portion every meal - 1 portion as a snack - total 3-4 portions a day**

Carbohydrates provide our bodies with the readiest source of fuel. Starchy carbs also contain fibre, which helps keep our digestive tract healthy and functioning regularly. Wholemeal and wholegrain are the better options, as these are higher in fibre, as are potatoes with skins on. The majority of micronutrients are found in the husk of the whole grain and just under the skin of potatoes, so by leaving them on you are getting all the goodness from the food. Foods high in fibre, also keep us feeling fuller for longer.

- Bread - 2 medium slices
- Cooked Pasta, Couscous and Rice - 3 serving spoons
- Egg sized new potatoes - 3
- Medium baked potato - 1
- Cereals or porridge oats - 3 handfuls
- Rice cakes/oat cakes - 2-3



### **Fruit and Vegetables - 2 portions every meal - 1-2 portions as a snack - total at least 5 a day**

Fruit and veg is high in fibre keeping our digestive system healthy. Fruit and veg also contains tonnes of vitamins and minerals. Vitamins and minerals are the micronutrients that we need to keep our bodies in tip top condition. These are the nutrients that keep our immune systems healthy and our hormones in balance, our skin and hair in good condition and our organs functioning as they should. This is why it is so important to get at least 5-a-day!



Frozen fruit and veg is just as good as fresh, so don't worry about always getting fresh vegetables in - an emergency bag of frozen mixed veg in the freezer will do the job on the days when you can't get to the shops!

- Green vegetables - 4 tbsp
- Salad veg - 1/2 a pepper, a medium tomato, 5cm piece of cucumber, 3 sticks of celery, small cereal bowl of leaves
- Pulses - 3 tbsp (only counts as one of your five a day, once)
- Small fruit - 2 plums, satsumas, kiwi, 7-10 berries
- Medium fruit - 1 apple, banana, orange or nectarine
- Dried fruit - small handful
- Cooked vegetables - 3 tbsp
- Fruit Juice and Smoothies - 150ml small glass (only counts as one of your five a day, once)

#### **Protein - 1 portion every meal - total 2-3 portions a day**

Protein is the macronutrient that helps build muscle, strong bones and repair damaged tissues. Meat is good for providing iron, to stop us feeling tired; whilst fish, particularly oily fish, is great for keeping our brains healthy. If you are a vegetarian or vegan, you can still get good nutrition from pulses and nuts, which give us the same iron and good fats, to keep us healthy.

Red meat and processed meats (such as cured meats, bacon, ham, burgers and sausages) should be kept to less than 500g per adult, in total across the week - as there is evidence which links these foods to increased risk of bowel cancer, due to the preservatives used in their production.

- Chicken, fish fillet and meat - about half the size of your whole hand
- Tinned fish - one medium can (approx. 160g net weight)
- Bacon - 2 slices
- Baked Beans - half a standard can (approx. 200g)
- Sausages - 2
- Fish fingers/chicken goujons - 2-3 pieces
- Eggs - 2

## Dairy and Alternatives - total 2-3 portions a day

Lower fat options are a better choice for dairy products, for non-dairy alternatives choose unsweetened and fortified versions. Dairy foods, and vegan alternatives, give us calcium to keep our bones and teeth healthy. Opting for lower fat and sugar versions keeps the calories and the fat lower, whilst still getting the benefits of the calcium.

- Milk - cereal portion - approx 125ml or half a glass
- Milk - as a drink - 200ml - one glass
- Yogurt - one pot or 4 tbsp
- Soft cheese - 3 tsp
- Cottage cheese - 3 tbsp
- Hard cheese - size of two thumbs

## Oils, fats and spreads

We do need some fat in our diet, but enough of that comes from all the other foods that we eat - meat, fish, nuts, seeds and dairy foods. Therefore, oils and fats should be used minimally wherever possible. A common misconception is that some fats are better than others, in some ways this is true, but still using too much of them can cause weight gain due to the high calorie content. The best fats to use are unsaturated fats such as vegetable oils, sunflower, rapeseed and olive oil. If you do use fats for cooking, we recommend using unsaturated spray oil/fat, such as a vegetable oil spray or olive oil spray, to help minimise the amount of fat you include through cooking.



Spreads made from unsaturated fats are also better for you, as they help to lower cholesterol. But again, these should be used minimally when preparing foods. A good way to reduce the amount of spread you use is to miss it out on sandwiches if you are using a wet filling, and use it on just one slice of bread on a dry filling. If using spread on toast, use it sparingly, rather than lashings of the stuff.

## Children aged 12-18 - nutrition

As the calorie needs of children aged 12-18 years are close to that of adult females, portion sizes for this age bracket should be similar to adult female recommended portions. For less active children, a slight reduction in portion size would be beneficial, to avoid any weight gain.

## Children aged 6-11 - nutrition

Given the varying calorie requirements of children in this age bracket, it is difficult to assign standard portion sizes for children. However, a good guide is to use their fist. Look at how much smaller their fist is to yours, then use this as a guide as to how much you reduce their portion size by. If their fist is about a third smaller than



yours, reduce their portion size by a third. If it is half the size of yours, then give them half. Make sure your portion size is the right size to start with though, and you aren't overeating yourself.

It is better to start children with a smaller portion, then give them more if they are still hungry, rather than giving them the same sized portion as an adult to start with. Make sure they have water to drink with their meal too, so they don't confuse thirst with hunger.

Try to lose the expectation of them clearing their plates. We find it hard as parents, to not expect this, because it's ingrained in us to avoid food waste wherever possible.

Children tend to eat up to the point when they are full, but we all know if there is an expectation of a pudding or dessert, they will want that over anything else - and there will always be room for pudding. An idea might be to keep puddings to once or twice a week, as a special treat. This will stop the children refusing the main meal in preference to their pudding.

## **Under 5's - nutrition**

Under 5-year olds have very different needs to older children and adults. Because under 5's tend to have smaller appetites, it is important to give them energy and nutrient dense foods, that give them the nutrients they need without being too bulky. Under 5's should still be encouraged to eat the same healthy foods as the rest of the family, just in different portion sizes. However, if the rest of the family are eating low fat or diet foods, these generally aren't suitable for children under 5.

Under 5's should be given foods from all the main food groups, the information below gives some guidance on portion sizes.

### **Bread, cereals and starchy carbohydrates - 1 portion at every meal and 2 snacks - total 5 portions a day**

Example portion sizes:

- Bread / scotch pancake / crumpet - 1/2 - 1 slice
- Pitta bread or tortilla - 1/4 -1/2
- Breakfast cereal - 3-5 tbsp
- Rice/Oat cakes/ breadsticks - 1-2
- Pasta, Couscous and Rice - 2-4 tbsp
- Baked/Roast/boiled medium potato - 1/4 -1/2
- Mashed potato - 1-3 tbsp
- Canned pasta in sauce - 2-4 tbsp

### **Fruit and vegetables - 1 portion at every meal and 2 snacks - total 5 a day**

Example portion sizes:

- 1/4 -1/2 medium apple, banana, mango, orange, peach, pear
- 1/2 -1 clementine, plum, apricot
- 1-3 dried apricots, dates, figs, cherry tomatoes, mushrooms
- 3-8 grapes, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries
- 1/2 - 2 tbsp dried fruit, cooked vegetables
- 2-4 tbsp canned fruit



## Milk and dairy foods - 3 portions a day

Children under 2 years should have whole milk and full fat yogurt. Children over 2 years can move to semi-skimmed milk, if they eat well. Skimmed or 1% milk is not suitable for children under 5. Whilst keeping milk in the diet, it is important to not rely on milk as a food source, as under 5's need to transition to a proper solid food diet.



Example portion sizes:

- Cow's milk, breastmilk or formula - 100ml as a drink
- Grated cheese - 2/3 tbsp
- Cheese ball (babybel type) - 1
- Rice pudding - 2-4 tbsp
- Small yogurt tubes/ small pots of fromage frais yogurts - 2
- Cheese sauce over pasta or veg - 1-3 tbsp

**Meat, fish and vegetarian alternatives such as eggs, pulses, nuts and soya - 2 portions a day - 1 at lunch, 1 at dinner**

- Cooked meat - 1/2 - 1 slice
- Minced meat - 2-4 tbsp
- Fish fillet - 1/4 - 1
- Fish fingers - 1-2
- Tinned fish/prawns - 1/2 - 1 1/2 tbsp
- Scrambled egg - 2-3 tbsp
- Boiled / poached egg - 1/2 - 1
- Pulses/beans - 2-3 tbsp
- Chopped/ground nuts - 1-2 tbsp

## Physical Activity - How much is enough?

Physical activity doesn't just help to control our weight, but it also makes us fitter and stronger. The fitter and stronger we are the better our bodies function and we are less likely to develop life threatening or life limiting illnesses as we age.



Exercising regularly will improve the health of your heart and lungs. It can also help you to lose weight, especially if combined with a calorie-controlled diet. There are also mental benefits of exercise. Committing to and following through with exercise sessions a couple of times a week can help boost confidence and self-belief, as you prove to yourself that you can set yourself a target and achieve a goal. Exercising regularly can also be a great stress reliever and has even been shown to combat depression.

Being active is part and parcel of a healthy lifestyle. Current guidelines say that adults should participate in both strength and

aerobic activity each week, spending 150 minutes a week on moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity and 2 sessions of strengthening exercises, working the whole body.

Moderate activity is something that requires moderate effort e.g. brisk walking, gentle swimming, water aerobics, hiking, gardening, flat bike ride, or ball games such as netball, basketball.

Vigorous activity is something that requires vigorous effort e.g. jogging or running, fast swimming, hilly bike ride, football, rugby, skipping, aerobics classes, martial arts.

Our [HIIT Sessions](#) make ideal aerobic exercises, whilst our [lower impact exercises](#) are good for gently building strength.

It makes sense to build in activity that fits with your family's work, school and other commitments. If you are currently inactive as a family start slowly maybe by going for a walk once a week, and choosing to always take the stairs instead of the lift or escalator. You will soon find how this gets easier.

For adults with sedentary jobs, it can be difficult to get the right amount of exercise, so building it in wherever possible as a part of everyday life makes it a little easier to achieve. Can you walk to work or school some days? Or park a mile away from work and walk the rest of the way? Could you do an activity in your lunch break a couple of times a week? You don't have to do everything all at once, just take baby steps to become more active, then once you are comfortable with something, add in a new challenge.



You could try some of our [programmes](#), such as sport walking or couch to 5k as a family, or do a couple of [HIIT Sessions](#) a week as a family, or the children might fancy trying team sports, swimming, martial arts, gymnastics or dancing after school. There might be a class that each member of the family wants to try, so you have to make it all fit in, whilst still having family time together.

There's nothing nicer than spending Sunday afternoon out for a walk, then coming home to a lovely home cooked dinner that has been cooking away in the oven whilst you have been out. This is a great way to spend time together before the start of another busy week, whilst still keeping up your new healthy lifestyle.

To help plan the family's activities, use our [exercise planner](#).

## **Kids and physical activity**

Our children are becoming more sedentary than ever before, due to the highly technological society that we live in. This is why it is so important to encourage children to get off their devices and out into the fresh air, just moving more.

Physical activity gives children a healthy appetite. If kids are left for too long in the house playing computer games or watching TV, they are bound to snack more out of boredom, which then spoils their appetite for their proper meals. Getting them out in the fresh air, keeps them away from the biscuit tin and lets them build up a proper appetite for meal times. Fresh air also helps to tire them out for bedtime!

## Children under 5 - physical activity

Current recommendations are for children under 5 to be physically active for 180 minutes spread throughout the day, and time spent doing sedentary activities should be minimised. This doesn't mean three hours of formal exercise, it means ensuring that for at least three hours every day, children under 5 are using their bodies, whether that is through walking to a friend's or the park, playing chase, or energetic play.



## Children aged 5-18 - physical activity

For children aged between 5 and 18 years of age, it is recommended that they participate in 60 active minutes a day (moderate to vigorous activity) and on 3 days a week they should participate in activities that build strength.

Moderate to vigorous activity includes walking, playground activities, scooter or bike riding, dancing, team games, swimming and martial arts.

Strength activities include swinging and climbing on playground equipment or trees, games using their strength like tug of war, football, rugby and tennis, or formal strength building exercises like sit ups, press ups etc.

Any jumping or climbing activities will also strengthen bones as well as muscles.

## Healthy future for all

Getting our families eating well and moving more means we are getting them on the path to a healthy future. Ensuring that our children understand what is a healthy plate of food, and how to eat a balanced diet means we can minimise the risk of them developing diseases like type 2 diabetes in childhood, and high cholesterol and heart disease in later life.

Statistics show that overweight and obese children grow into overweight and obese adults. We as parents have a responsibility to ensure that our children remain a healthy weight, whilst we have parental control over their diet and activities. Teaching our children how to manage their weight through a healthy diet and exercise gives them the tools they need to develop healthy habits for their own future and that of your grandchildren.

## Golden rules

To consolidate everything in this Family Programme we have developed a set of Golden Rules, to remind you of the basics.

1. Everyone should get their five a day every day (and more if you can). 80g (40g for under 5's) of fruit or vegetables counts as one of your five a day. Fruit juice can only count once (150ml) – due to its high sugar content – high sugar = more calories. Potatoes do not count as one of your five a day.
2. Drink plenty of water – it helps you feel fuller and keeps you hydrated. Sometimes we mistake thirst for hunger. Make a habit of carrying a water bottle around with you, to sip when needed. Not only does it keep you hydrated, but it's better for the environment than buying plastic bottles of mineral water.
3. Choose wholemeal/wholegrain bread, rice and pasta as a rule. Wholegrains contain more nutrients than 'white' varieties and keep you fuller for longer.

4. Choose skinless, lean white meats and fish, avoid battered or breaded foods, and anything deep fried.
5. Choose healthier cooking practices – grilling instead of frying, cutting visible fat off meats. Poaching, boiling and steaming are all fat free methods of cooking
6. Keep regular meal and snack times. Give snacks at a planned, regular time rather than picking mindlessly at foods. Make snacks a piece of fruit or raw veg pieces – carry a couple of pieces of fruit in your bag for when you're out and about. Snacks should be healthy - keep treat food for just that - a treat, once or twice a week - not every day.
7. Adults should cut down on alcohol – try to have at least 5 alcohol free days a week
8. Take your time with your meals, eat slowly, sip water with your meal, and stop eating when you are full.
9. Ban phones, TV and other devices at the table - enjoy each other's company and the food that you have prepared.
10. Encourage kids to help with meal planning, shopping for ingredients and cooking the meals, then they have an understanding of where their food comes from. Talk about the benefits of certain types of foods - focusing on the health benefits of foods they might not be keen on may encourage them to eat them.
11. Encourage kids to keep trying new things - it can take a few times before they decide they like a new flavour.
12. Get moving - whatever you are doing now - can you do more?
13. Make healthier choices most of the time! This isn't a diet, you are changing your family's lifestyle forever!