

The Department of Education and the Department of Health encourage all pre-schools to provide healthier food and drinks throughout the day.

This healthy breaks resource provides guidance on suitable snacks and drinks for children to have during their break, whether provided at pre-school or brought from home.

## Why is a healthy break important?

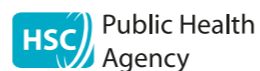
- Childhood is an important time to establish good eating and drinking habits for future health.
- Healthy eating schemes give children the knowledge and opportunity to make healthier choices.
- A healthy snack at break time can help with children's concentration and behaviour.
- It encourages suitable drinks and snacks to help prevent tooth decay.
- It helps to meet our target of five or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day.

If your child requires a special diet that will not allow the guidance to be met exactly, please discuss with your pre-school.

Want to find out more?

Enjoy healthy eating  
[www.enjoyhealthyeating.info](http://www.enjoyhealthyeating.info)

5 a day – Live well – NHS choices  
[www.nhs.uk/livewell/5aday/pages/5adayhome.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/5aday/pages/5adayhome.aspx)



**Public Health Agency**  
12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BS.  
Tel: 0300 555 0114 (local rate).  
[www.publichealth.hscni.net](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net)

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# Healthy breaks for pre-school children

A guide for parents



## What is included in healthy breaks?

### Drinks

It is important that children drink enough during the day, so that they don't become dehydrated and tired. Water should be freely available throughout the day and drinks should always be included for break time and lunch. Water and milk are the most suitable drinks for children.

**Water:** tap water or unflavoured, still, bottled water.

**Milk:** all whole, semi-skimmed unflavoured milk. Skimmed milk should not be given to children under five years..

**Not suitable:** fruit juices (including pure fruit juice), smoothies, sparkling water, squash or fizzy drinks, even those labelled 'no added sugar', 'diet' or 'zero'.



### Fruit and vegetables

Help your child get the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables a day by including one or more portions as a snack for their break.

This includes all fresh fruit and vegetables and pots or tins of fruit in fruit juice, but not in syrup.

A portion for your pre-school child could be:

- 1/2 medium sized piece of fruit, eg apple, orange, banana, pear
- 1 small fruit, eg kiwi fruit, satsuma, plum
- 1/2 cup of grapes, cherries or berries
- 1 slice of melon
- 1 heaped tablespoon of fresh veg, eg chopped or sliced carrots, peppers or sugar-snap peas
- 1 heaped tablespoon of fruit salad (fresh or tinned in fruit juice)

As children grow, portion sizes should increase. Portions for older primary school children should be twice the size of those for pre-school children.

**To reduce the risk of choking in young children under the age of five years, smaller fruits and vegetables like grapes and cherry tomatoes should be halved by cutting lengthways.**

**Not suitable:** fruit tinned in syrup, dried fruit (eg raisins, sultanas) and processed fruit bars (eg fruit winders, fruit flakes etc). These are high in sugar and can cause tooth decay, so are not suitable as between-meal snacks.



### Other snacks

Children need more or less energy (calories) depending on their age and stage of development. Some breads, cereals and yogurts can help to meet these extra energy needs and help your child feel more satisfied.

#### Bread-based snacks

White or wholemeal bread, rolls or baguettes, toast, plain bagels, wheaten, soda, potato or pitta bread, spread thinly with a little margarine, low-fat spread or butter; plain bread sticks, plain crackers or plain unsalted rice cakes; or a small sandwich with a sugar-free filling such as tomato, tuna, chicken, cheese etc.

#### Cereals

Low-sugar cereals such as Weetabix, Shredded Wheat, Rice Krispies or porridge.

#### Yogurts

Plain yogurt or plain fromage frais. You could add chopped fruit or tinned fruit (not in syrup).

**Not suitable:** sugary spreads, including jam, honey, marmalade, chocolate spread or peanut butter.

Cereal bars or breakfast cereals coated with sugar, honey or chocolate, eg Sugar Puffs, Coco Pops, Cheerios, coated Weetabix or Frosted Shreddies.

Sweetened breads and pastries, eg pancakes, scones (plain and fruit), fruit bread, malt loaf, brioche, croissants or Danish pastries.

Yogurt flavoured with fruit, toffee or chocolate or those with added fruit sauces, chocolate balls, seeds etc.

The above are not recommended as they contain more sugar, fat or salt.