

Portion Sizes for children aged 1-4 years

The amount of food that young children eat varies from day to day and meal to meal. Use our portion size ranges as a guide on how much to offer your 1-4 year olds, then allow children to eat to their appetite. Taller or more active children will eat larger portions than shorter or less active children

Food Group 1: Bread, cereals, potatoes & other starchy foods

Offer a serving from within these portion size ranges at each meal and some snacks.

Foods marked with an asterisk * should be limited to mealtimes and no more than one snack per day because of their sugar content.

BREADS

Range of portion sizes

Bagel

1/4 - 1/2 bagel

Bread roll

1/4 - 3/4 roll

Bread slices (fresh or toasted) - wheatgerm

1/2 - 1 medium slice

Bread slices (fresh or toasted) - granary

1/2 - 1 medium slice

Bread slices (fresh or toasted) - white

1/2 - 1 medium slice

Bread sticks

1 - 3 large breadsticks

Bun (e.g. hot cross)*

1/4 - 1/2 bun

Chapatti

1/2 - 1 chapatti

Cream / wholemeal crackers

1 - 3 crackers

Crispbread

1/2 - 2 crispbreads

Crumpet

1/4 - 1 crumpet

Maltloaf*

1/2 - 1 slice

Naan bread

1/8 - 1/3 naan

Oatcakes

1 - 2 oatcakes

Pitta bread

1/2 - 1 mini or 1/4 - 1/2 pitta

Rice cakes

1 - 3 medium rice cakes

Scone

1/2 - 1 small scone

Teabread*

1/2 - 1 1/2 slices

Tortilla

1/4 - 1/2 large tortilla

BREAKFAST CEREALS

Range of portion sizes

Dry flaked cereal (e.g. Cornflakes / Rice Krispies / Cheerios™)*

3 - 6 heaped tablespoons

Museli*

2 - 4 tablespoons

Porridge / Ready Brek™ made up with milk / water

5 - 8 tablespoons

Wheat biscuits (e.g. Weetabix™)*

1/2 - 1 1/2 biscuits

COUSCOUS, PASTA, POTATOES AND RICE

Range of portion sizes

Cassava / plantain - boiled or fried

1 - 3 tablespoons

Couscous (cooked)

2 - 4 heaped tablespoons

Noodles (cooked)

1/2 - 1 small cup

Pasta (cooked)

2 - 5 tablespoons

Pasta in tomato sauce (e.g. spaghetti hoops in tomato sauce)

2 - 4 tablespoons

baked

1/4 - 1/2 medium potato

boiled

1/2 - 1 1/2 egg - sized potatoes

chips

4 - 8 thick cut chips

croquettes

1 - 2 mini croquettes

mashed

1 - 4 tablespoons

roast

1/2 - 1 small potato

waffles

1/2 - 1 waffle

wedges

2 - 4 medium wedges

Rice - boiled or fried

2 - 5 tablespoons

Food Group 2: Fruit and Vegetables

Offer at least 1 - 2 servings at each meal and also offer them with some snacks.

These are low energy, high nutrient foods - allow toddlers to eat larger portions if they wish to.

Foods marked with an asterisk * should be limited to mealtimes and no more than one snack per day because of their sugar content

FRUITS

Range of portion sizes

Apple

1/4 - 1/2 medium apple

Avocado

1/2 - 2 tablespoons

Banana

1/4 - 1 medium banana

Clementine / tangerine / mandarin

1/2 - 1 fruit

Dried apricots / prunes

1 - 4 whole fruits

Dried fruit snack bar*

1/2 - 1(15g) bar

Fruit salad

1/2 - 1 small bowl

Grapes and berries (e.g. blackberries / blueberries

/ raspberries / strawberries)

3 - 10 small grapes / berries

Kiwifruit / plum / apricot

1/2 - 1 fruit

Mango

1/4 - 1/2 mango

Melon

1/4 - 1 thin slice

Orange

1/4 - 1/2 orange

Peach / nectarine

1/4 - 1 whole fruit

Pear

1/4 - 3/4 whole fruit

Pineapple

1/4 - 1 medium slice

Raisins / sultanas*

1/2 - 2 tablespoons

Stewed fruit / tinned fruit / fruit puree

2 - 4 tablespoons

VEGETABLES

Range of portion sizes

Bamboo shoots

1/2 - 2 tablespoons

Beetroot

1/2 - 2 tablespoons

Broccoli / cauliflower

1 - 4 small florets or 1/2 - 2 tablespoons

Brussels sprouts

1/2 - 3 sprouts

Cabbage

1 - 3 tablespoons

Carrot

1 - 3 tablespoons / 2 - 6 carrot sticks

Celery / cucumber / radishes / peppers / other salad vegetable

2 - 8 small sticks / slices

Cherry tomatoes

1 - 4 cherry tomatoes

Courgettes / squash / okra / aubergine

1/2 - 2 tablespoons

Green / French beans

1/2 - 2 tablespoons

Leeks / onions / shallots

1/2 - 2 tablespoons

Lettuce

1 - 2 small leaves

Mange touts

2 - 8 mange touts

Mixed vegetables

1/2 - 2 tablespoons

Mushrooms

1 - 4 button mushrooms

Parsnip

1/2 - 2 tablespoons

Peas

1/2 - 2 tablespoons

Spring greens / spinach (cooked)

1/2 - 2 tablespoons

Stir fried or roasted vegetables

1/2 - 2 tablespoons

Swede / turnip

1/2 - 2 tablespoons

Sweet corn

1/2 - 2 tablespoons

Tomato

1/4 - 1 small tomato

Vegetable soup

1/2 - 1 small bowl (60 - 125ml)

Food Group 3: Milk, cheese and yogurt

Offer a serving from within these portion size ranges about 3 times each day. An excess of these foods can reduce the appetite for iron-containing foods from the other food groups so limit serving sizes to those indicated.

Milk should be given in a cup, mug or glass - not a bottle. Semi skimmed milk can be used from two years of age and skimmed milk from five years of age for children who eat a wide variety of foods, but changing is not necessary.

MILK

Range of portion sizes

Breast milk

5 - 10 minutes breastfeeding

Cow's milk as a drink

1 cup of milk (100 - 120 ml / 3 - 4oz)

Custard

5 - 7 tablespoons

Flavoured milk (e.g. chocolate / strawberry)

1 cup of milk (100 - 120 ml / 3 - 4oz)

Formula milk, Growing Up milk or Calcium enriched soya milk*

1 cup of milk (100 - 120 ml / 3 - 4oz)

Milk pudding

4 - 6 tablespoons

Rice pudding

2 - 5 tablespoons

YOGURTS AND MILK PUDDINGS

Range of portion sizes

Yogurt

1 average pot (125ml)

Fromage frais

2 small pots (60g each)

Calcium enriched soya dessert

1 average pot (125ml)

Custard*

5 - 7 tablespoons

Milk pudding*

4 - 6 tablespoons

Rice pudding*

2 - 5 tablespoons

CHEESE

Range of portion sizes

Cheese sauce

1 - 4 tablespoons

Cheddar / Edam / Parmesan / Brie / Camembert / Mozzarella

In a sandwich or as a pizza topping

Cottage / ricotta cheese

1/2 - 1 tablespoon in a sandwich

Grated cheese

2 - 4 tablespoons as a pizza topping or in a sandwich

Processed cheese

15 - 21g (1 slice / 1 triangle or string / 1 Mini Babybel™)

Spreadable cheese

Thickly spread on a slice of bread

Food Group 4: Meat, Fish, Eggs, Nuts and Pulses

Offer a serving from within these portion size ranges 2 - 3 times per day - twice for toddlers eating meat and fish and 3 times a day for vegetarians.

MEAT

Range of portion sizes

Bacon

1/4 - 1 rasher

Beef

1/2 - 1 slice

Beef burger / lamb burger without bun

1/4 - 1 small burger

Chicken

1 - 2 small slices

Chicken drumsticks

1/2 - 1 drumstick

Chicken nuggets

2 - 4 small nuggets

Chicken / turkey burger without bun

1/4 - 1 small burger

Duck

1 - 2 slices of breast meat

Frankfurter

1/2 - 1 small frankfurter

Ham

1/2 - 1 1/2 small slices 1 1/2 - 4 wafer thin slices

Lamb

1/2 - 1 slice

Lamb's liver

1/2 - 1 thin slice

Liver pate

1 - 2 tablespoons

Minced meat

2 - 5 tablespoons

Pork

1/2 - 2 small slices

Rabbit

1 - 2 slices

Salami

1 - 2 slices

Sausages

1/4 - 1 medium sausage

Sausages - cocktail

1 - 3 cocktail sausages

Turkey

1 - 2 slices of breast or dark meat

FISH

Range of portion sizes

Fish: white / oily fresh fish

1/4 - 1 small fillet or 1 - 3 tbsp

Shell fish: prawns, mussels etc

1/2 - 2 tablespoons

Taramasalata

1 - 2 tablespoons

Tinned fish in a sandwich / salad (e.g. tuna / salmon / sardines)

1/2 - 1 1/2 tablespoons

EGGS

Range of portion sizes

Omelette (1 egg)

1/2 - 1 omelette

Poached / boiled / fried

1/2 - 1 egg

Scrambled egg

2 - 4 tablespoons

NUTS

Range of portion sizes

Ground, chopped or crushed nuts

1 - 2 tablespoons

Peanut butter or other nut butters

1/2 - 1 tablespoon or thinly spread on bread

PULSESES

Range of portion sizes

Baked beans in tomato sauce

2 - 4 tablespoons

Bhajis or pakora made with chickpea flour

1/2 - 1 ½ bhajis or pakoras

Chickpeas / hummus

1 - 2 tablespoons

Dhal / cooked lentils

2 - 4 tablespoons

Falafels

1 - 3 mini falafels (25g each)

Red kidney beans / bean salad / other starchy beans

2 - 4 tablespoons

Tofu

2 - 4 tablespoons

SOUP

Range of portion sizes

Homemade soups with meat / fish / pulses

1 small bowl (90 - 125ml)

Food Group 5: Foods high in Fat and Sugar

Toddlers under two years of age have lower energy requirements and should not be offered sweet puddings, cakes, biscuits, confectionery, chocolate or savoury snacks such as crisps.

Biscuits, cakes and puddings

Include once a day.

BISCUITS

Range of portion sizes

Chocolate coated

1/2 - 1 biscuit

Digestive (plain)

1/2 - 1 biscuit

Fruit (e.g. garibaldi)

1 - 2 biscuits

Plain (e.g. rich tea / ginger nut)

1 - 2 biscuits

Sandwich (e.g. bourbon / custard cream)

1/2 - 1 biscuit

CAKES

Cake - style pudding with fruit (e.g. apple sponge cake)

2 - 4 tablespoons

Cake - style pudding without fruit (e.g. sticky toffee pudding)

2 - 4 tablespoons

Cup cake

1/2 - 1 (25g) cup cake

Fruit cake

1/2 - 1 slice

Madeira / swiss roll / sponge

1/4 - 1/2 slice

Cereal bar

1/2 - 1 (20g) bar

Chocolate mousse

1 - 3 tablespoons

Croissant (plain)

1/2 - 1 (45g) pastry

Danish / chocolate croissant

1/4 - 1/2 medium pastry

Muffin

1/8 - 1/4 of a large (125g) muffin

PUDDINGS

Fruit crumble (e.g. apple or rhubarb crumble)

2 - 4 tablespoons

Fruit pie or tart (e.g. apple pie / apricot tart)

1/2 - 1 small slice

Fruit sorbet / smoothie

2 - 3 tablespoons

Ice cream

2 - 3 heaped tablespoons

Jelly

2 - 4 tablespoons

Pancake

1/2 - 1 small pancake

Trifle

2 - 4 tablespoons

Fats and oils

Include 2 servings per day

FATS AND OILS

Range of portion sizes

Butter / margarine

thinly spread - 1 teaspoon

Double cream

1 tablespoon

Mayonnaise / salad cream / oil / vinegar dressing

1 - 2 teaspoons

Oil for frying - rapeseed oil is best

1 teaspoon

Sauces and sweet and savoury spreads

Include 1 serving per day

SAUCES AND SWEET AND SAVOURY SPREADS

Range of portion sizes

Chocolate spread

thinly spread - 1 teaspoon

Honey / jam / marmalade / syrup

thinly spread - 1 teaspoon

Gravy

1 - 2 tablespoons

Tomato ketchup / brown or BBQ sauce

1 - 2 teaspoons

Added sugar

1/2 - 1 teaspoon

Confectionery, sweet drinks and savoury snacks

Limit these foods to occasional mealtimes - no more than one item once a week.

CONFECTIONERY AND SWEET DRINKS

Range of portion sizes

Bar of chocolate / chocolate - coated biscuit bar

2 - 4 squares or a funsize chocolate bar

Boiled sweets

1 - 2 sweets

Chocolate buttons

6 - 8 small buttons

Ice lolly

1/4 - 1/2 small ice lolly

Popcorn - sweet

1/2 - 1 small cup

Soft Sweets (e.g. jelly tots / jelly beans)

2 - 4 sweets

Diluted squashes

100-120ml / 3-4oz

Fruit juices

100-120ml / 3-4oz

SAVOURY SNACKS

Range of portion sizes

Bombay mix

1 - 3 teaspoons

Corn / Tortilla chips

4 - 6 chips

Crisps and packet snacks (e.g. Wotsits™ / Hula hoops™)

4 - 6 crisps / Wotsits™ / Hula hoops™

French fries - thin (fast food)

6 - 10 fries

Fried flatbreads (e.g. puris / parathas)

1/8 - 1/4 small puris or parathas

Popcorn - unsweetened

1/2 - 1 small cup

Poppadoms

1/2 - 1 poppadom

Vegetable crisps

4 - 6 crisps

Portions with foods from more than one food group

The food groups included in each portion are shown in the third column of each table.

CASSEROLES, CURRIES, STEW OR STIR FRY

Range of portion sizes

Food Groups

Meat / chicken / fish / pulses with vegetable based sauce and potatoes

3 - 6 tablespoons

1, 2 and 4

Meat / chicken / fish / pulses with vegetable based sauce without potatoes

2 - 5 tablespoons

2 and 4

FISH PRODUCTS

Range of portion sizes

Food Groups

Fish battered or in breadcrumbs

1 - 3 heaped tablespoons

4 and 5

Fish cakes

1/2 - 1 (90g) fish cake

1 and 4

Fish fingers

1 - 2 fish fingers

4 and 5

Fish and potato pie

2 - 6 tablespoons

1 and 4

PASTA DISHES

Range of portion sizes

Food Groups

Lasagne (meat)

2 - 5 tablespoons

1 and 4

Lasagne (vegetable)

2 - 5 tablespoons

1 and 2

Macaroni cheese

2 - 5 tablespoons

1 and 3

Ravioli (meat)

2 - 5 tablespoons

1 and 4

Ravioli (vegetable)

2 - 5 tablespoons

1 and 2

Spaghetti bolognese

3 - 5 tablespoons

1 and 4

PIZZAS

Range of portion sizes

Food Groups

Pizza (meat / vegetable / cheese toppings)

1 - 2 small slices / 1/4 - 1 mini (70g) pizza

1, 3 and 4

Pizza (vegetarian toppings)

1 - 2 small slices / 1/4 - 1 mini (70g) pizza

1 and 3

PIES AND PASTRIES

Range of portion sizes

Food Groups

Shepherds pie / cottage pie

2 - 5 tablespoons

1 and 4

Meat pie in pastry

2 - 4 tablespoons

1, 4 and 5
Meat pasty 1/4 - 1/3 pasty 1, 4 and 5
Mini sausage rolls 1 - 3 mini sausage rolls 1, 4 and 5
Toad in the Hole 1/2 - 1 small 1, 4 and 5
Quiche 1/2 - 1 1/2 small slices (30 - 90g) 1, 3, 4 and 5
Samosas (meat) 1/2 - 1 samosa or 1 - 2 small samosas 1, 4 and 5
Samosas (vegetable) 1/2 - 1 samosa or 1 - 2 small samosas 1, 2 and 5
Yorkshire pudding 1/2 - 1 individual Yorkshire pudding 1 and 3
SOUPS
Range of portion sizes
Food Groups
Homemade vegetable soup with meat / fish / lentils / beans 1 small bowl (90 - 125ml) 2 and 4
Homemade minestrone soup 1 small bowl (90 - 125ml) 1 and 4

1-4 year olds eating within these ranges will meet their energy and nutrient needs - except vitamin D, for which all children need a supplement.

Diameters of plates and bowls photographed:

White plate: 9" / 23cm (approx)

White bowl: 6 1/2" / 16.5cm (approx)

Glass bowl: 4 3/4" / 12cm (approx)

Standard measuring spoons were used: 1 tablespoon is 15ml and 1 teaspoon is 5ml.