

Lunchbox tips for early years children

Tips



- Base the main lunchbox item on food like bread, pasta, rice and potatoes choosing wholegrain where you can.
- Don't like wholegrain bread? Try making a sandwich with one slice of white and one slice of brown bread. You can freeze bread to keep it fresh for longer while introducing them to different types of bread.
- Try to include a pot of veg such as chopped cherry tomatoes, carrot sticks or cucumber. You could add a pot of hummus or reduced fat cream cheese to go with this which makes the lunch more interactive and exciting for the child.
- Swap crisps for things like breadsticks or rice cakes.
- Swap cereal bars, cakes, chocolate and biscuits for things like malt loaf, fruit breads or fruit.

•I don't have time to make everything from scratch: Try making the packed lunch the night before, cook extra pasta, rice or couscous and add that to the packed lunch as an alternative to sandwiches.

•My child is very fussy with what they will eat, and I'm worried they will be left hungry: Try making small changes, such as adding in something new that is healthy before taking things away. Children often copy their peers so find out what other children have in their packed lunch and add some of these in. Get the child involved in making the lunch, but limiting their options to health ones.



•I can't afford to buy healthy options for my child's packed lunch: Although healthy options can often seem expensive, remember the child only needs me size portions. If they enjoy berries, frozen options are much cheaper and last longer, you can pop them in a tub in their lunchbox and they will be defrosted by lunchtime. Batch cooking can also be a cost effective way of preparing lunches for a few days, such as tuna pasta.

•My child will not drink water: Try adding fruit such as oranges and lemons to the water to add some flavour.

•I have tried putting in healthy options, but my child doesn't eat them, and I don't want to waste food: Food waste is never ideal, however children often go through phases of eating foods and then rejecting them. It's good to keep offering the child these options but make their lunch varied so they don't get bored. Keep persevering.

•I don't drive and my local shop is expensive with limited options: Have you tried online delivery options? although there is a charge for this, you can restrict your shopping to essential items only rather than picking things up as you see them, so it often means spending less. This can also help with saving time as you can repeat your order rather than selecting everything each week.



Snack ideas



Breadsticks

Rice cakes

Fresh or frozen fruit

Chopped veg and hummus

Plain natural yogurt

Cheese and crackers



Fruit loaf

Boiled eggs



Pitta bread slices with low fat cream cheese

Me size portions

The British Nutrition Foundation recommends children follow a 5-5-3-2 portion guide, this is across the whole day to be spread over meals and snacks.

Water

- 1 - 1.2 litres of water

Fruit and Veg - Five portions

Five portions

- Chopped grapes 3-8
- Veg sticks 2-6
- Cherry tomatoes 1-3
- Apple 1/4-1/2
- Banana 1/4-1

Starchy foods - Five portions

- Bread ½ -1 slice
- Cooked pasta or rice 2-4 tablespoons
- Rice or oat cakes 1-2
- Chapati ½-1

Dairy foods - Three portions

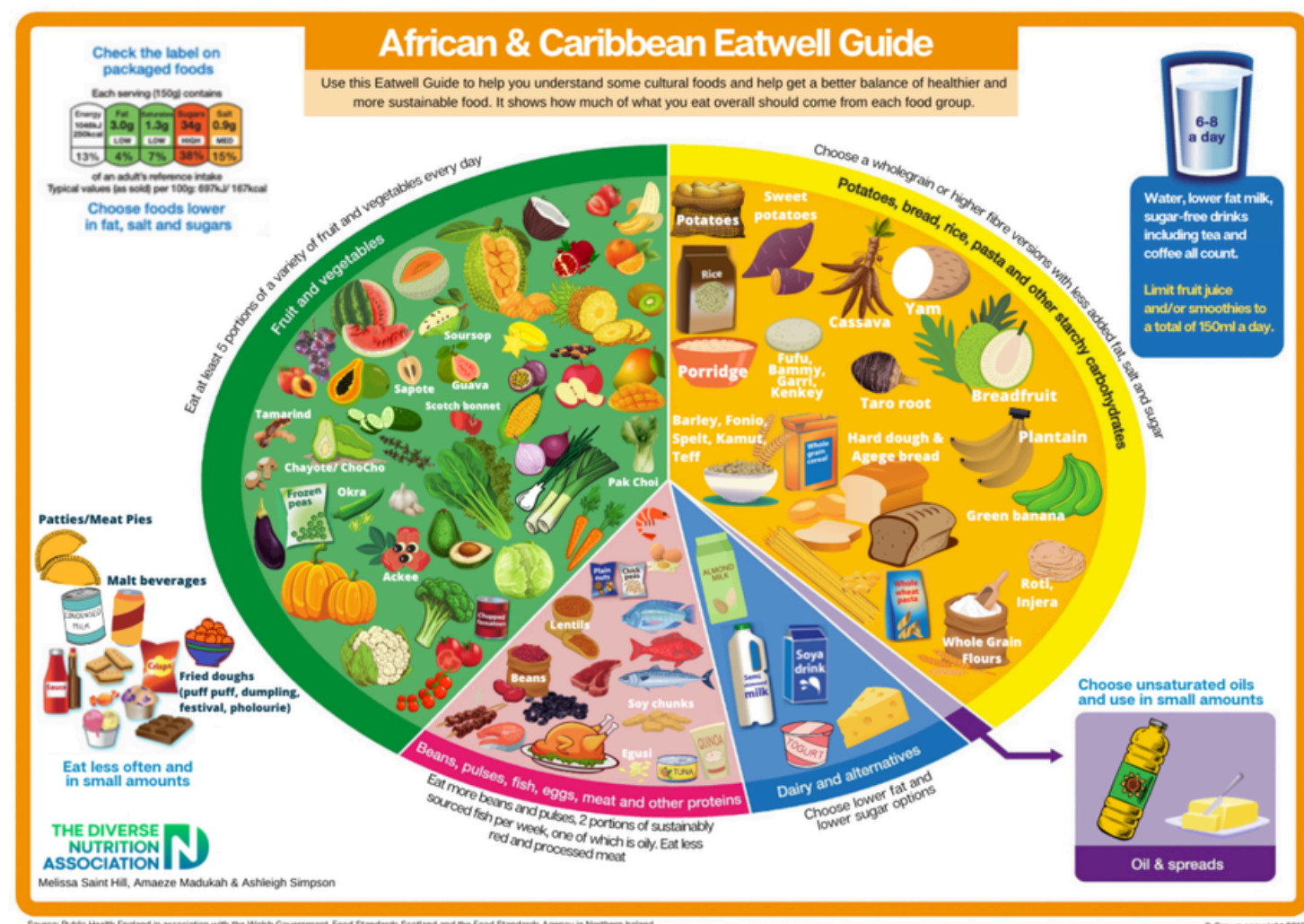
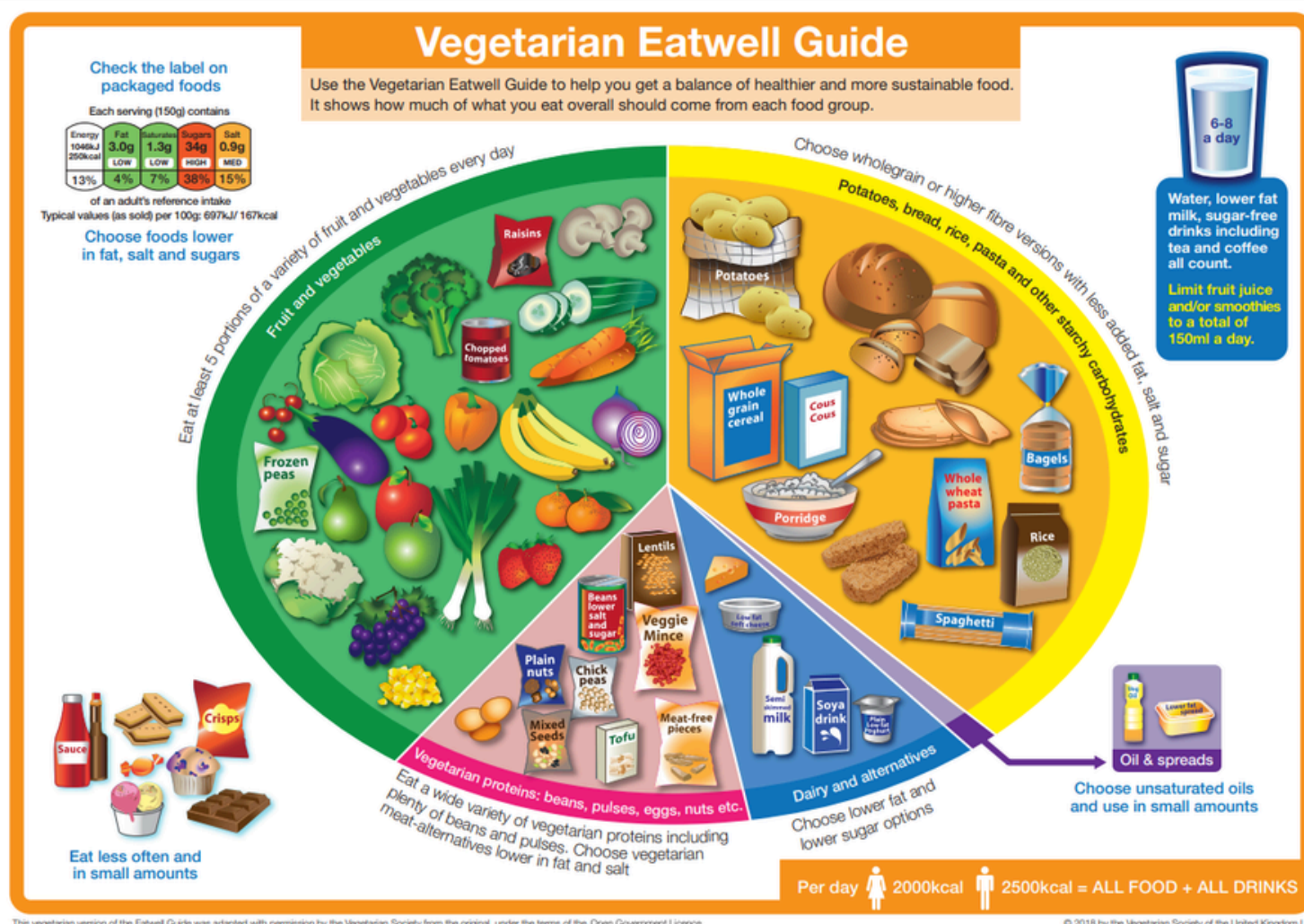
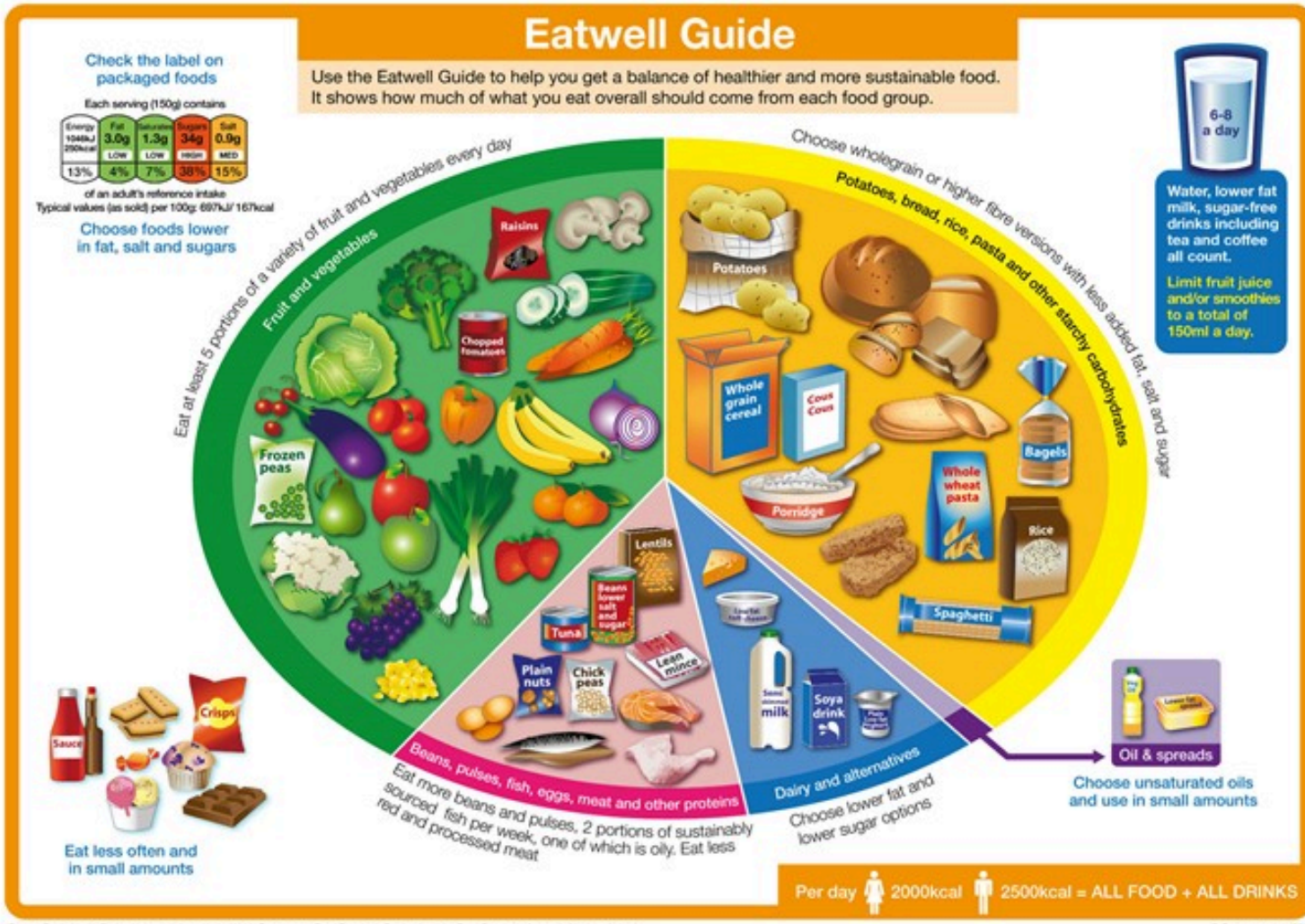
- Milk - 100ml
- Yoghurt 125ml
- Cheese triangle 1

Protein foods - Two portions

- Boiled egg ½ -1
- Chickpeas, kidney beans, dhal, lentils or beans 2-3 tablespoons.
- Tuna 2-3 tablespoons

Eatwell Guides

The Eatwell guide is a good tool to use to check that you are having a balanced diet. It shows how much of what should aim to eat each day.



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Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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