

# Tips to help your child maintain a healthy weight

## Information for patients, parents and guardians

This factsheet provides some useful tips to help your child maintain a healthy weight as they grow. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of your child's healthcare team.

### What causes weight gain in children?

Excess weight gain is caused by an imbalance of energy within the body. This means if your child eats more calories than they use on a daily basis, they will put on weight.

The amount of sugar that children consume on a daily basis is also a major contributing factor to excess weight gain in the UK.

### How can I help my child maintain a healthy weight?

We have suggested a few small changes below that you can make to your child's diet and lifestyle that can make a big difference to their health and help them maintain a healthy weight.

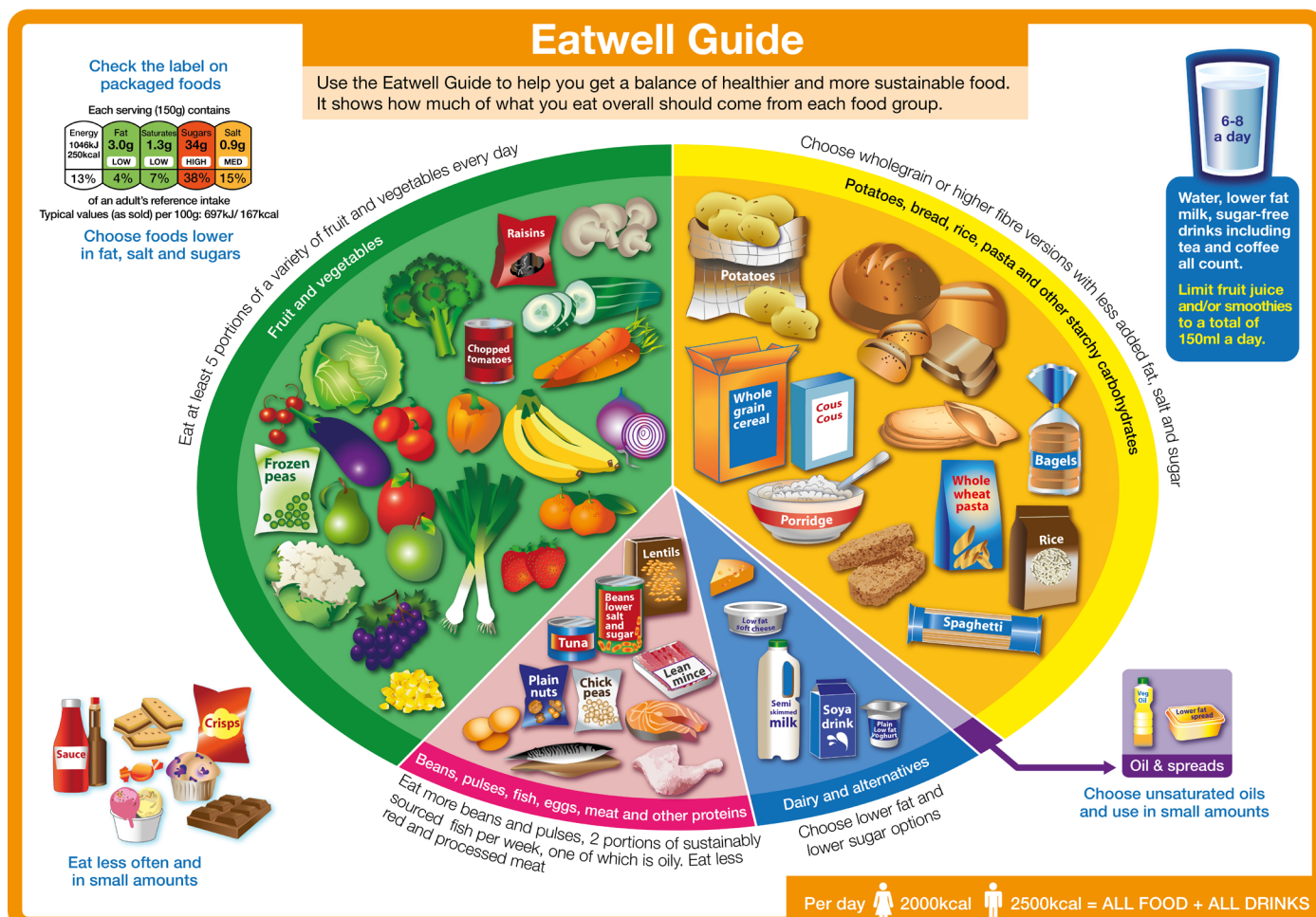
#### Step one – Keep a record of your child's weight

- Measure and record the weight of your child every two to four weeks so that you know how they are getting on.
- If your child's weight continues to increase, adjust their diet and activity to slow down or stop further weight gain.

#### Step two – Change your child's diet

- Children need children's portions. Make sure you use an appropriate sized plate for your child's age.
- If your child is unable to make healthy choices at school, pack them a healthy lunch instead.
- Use an app or a food diary to accurately record all the food and drink your child consumes over a few days. This will help you to plan ways to decrease their food intake.
- If your child is still gaining weight, try reducing their portion size by 10%.
- Improve the quality of your child's diet by increasing the amount of fruit, vegetables and fibre they have on a daily basis.
- It may take some time to reset your child's 'full feeling' with smaller portion sizes.
- Involve your child in preparing and making meals.
- Get the balance of foods right for your child:
  - Make sure they eat three regular meals a day.
  - Make sure they do not skip meals.
  - Always offer your child water before a snack, as they may be thirsty rather than hungry.
  - Swap high fat and high sugar snacks for healthier alternatives (fruit or vegetables).
  - Aim for five or more fruit and vegetable portions a day.

- Choose wholegrain versions of starchy foods (bread, rice and pasta).
- Choose lower fat milk and dairy options (keep an eye on the sugar in low fat yoghurts).
- Always check the calories of foods and drinks.
- Always check the sugar content of drinks (including fruit juices).
- Use the Eatwell Guide below to make sure your child's meals are balanced.



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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[www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide)

### Step three – Change your child's lifestyle

- Try to increase your child's daily physical activity (aim for 60 minutes every day).
- Try to be active as a family.
- Build exercise into your child's everyday life by:
  - walking to school
  - walking the dog (if you have one)
  - joining in an activity at school
  - spending 20 minutes in the park after school

- Encourage your child to join some sport clubs.
- Work together with your child towards a goal, such as a fun run or charity walk.
- Aim to do an activity every weekend as a family, such as:
  - walking (parks and local guides available)
  - playing frisbee or football in the park
  - cycling
  - swimming
  - dancing round the house
- Reduce your child's screen time (TV, video games, e-readers and internet access) to no more than two hours a day.
- Help your child to get a good night's sleep.

We recommend setting achievable goals to encourage progress and boost your child's self-esteem.

### Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's weight, please contact your child's GP, consultant or dietitian.

### Useful links

[www.nhs.uk/change4life/about-change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life/about-change4life)

[www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide)

[www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well)

[www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-children-under-five-years](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-children-under-five-years)

[www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/how-does-sugar-in-our-diet-affect-our-health](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/how-does-sugar-in-our-diet-affect-our-health)

[www.infantandtoddlerforum.org/portion-sizes-table-2015](http://www.infantandtoddlerforum.org/portion-sizes-table-2015)

[www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home](http://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home)

[www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving](http://www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving)

[www.mytimeactive.co.uk](http://www.mytimeactive.co.uk)

[www.nhs.uk/change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life)

[www.cwt.org.uk/publications](http://www.cwt.org.uk/publications)

[www.bupa.co.uk/health-information/nutrition-diet/portion-size](http://www.bupa.co.uk/health-information/nutrition-diet/portion-size)

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[www.uhs.nhs.uk/childrenshospital](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/childrenshospital)

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