



Nutrient Guide



This document has been produced to accompany the menu page on www.myschoollunch.co.uk/southampton. It contains a guide to nutrients found in food and how our body uses them to maintain our health.

All the menus produced by Southampton City Council comply with the current Government Guidelines and the Caroline Walker Trust Guidelines. If you would like more information about these then you can access the relevant websites by visiting: <http://www.myschoollunch.co.uk/southampton/parents/links/>.

Energy

A source or fuel for all our daily activities, counted in calories or kilojoules. Fat, protein and carbohydrate are all a source of energy. Just about everything we eat contains energy/calories. Energy needs increase as children grow and with increased activity. Overweight and obesity occur when people eat more calories than they burn up for growth, repair and activity.

Protein

Essential for growth and repair. Found in all types of food, but especially good sources are meat, poultry, fish, eggs, some dairy products, nuts, beans and lentils. In the UK most people have a more than adequate protein intake. Care needs to be taken when following a vegetarian or vegan diet to make sure that meat and fish are replaced with protein rich foods such as dairy products, nuts, beans and pulses.

Total Carbohydrate

The main source of energy in our diets. Starch and sugar are the main carbohydrate sources in our diet. These foods should provide about half our daily energy, with most of the energy coming from starchy carbohydrate foods, preferably wholegrains. Starchy carbohydrates such as bread, potatoes, rice, pasta and cereals should form the main part of the 3 daily meals, and are also healthy snack choices.

Non Milk Extrinsic Sugar

The type of sugar in foods that is not part of the cellular structure of foods – includes sugar added to foods as well as sugar in fruit juices and other drinks. This type of sugar can cause tooth decay and it is recommended that children have sugar containing foods and drinks at meals times and in small amounts. The sugar naturally found in milk is not counted as NMES as it is not harmful to teeth.

Fat

A concentrated source of energy in the diet, found in many foods including spreads, all oils, fried foods and pastries. Eating a lot of high fat foods can really increase the energy content of the diet and contribute to overweight and obesity. Low fat or reduced fat foods are healthier choices. Lower fat cooking methods include boiling, baking, 'dry roasting' and microwaving. Children should be advised to cut down on high fat snacks such as crisps, chocolate and pastries.



Saturated fat

The type of fat found in meat and dairy products as well as some baked foods. High intakes are linked to raised blood cholesterol levels and an increased risk of developing heart disease. Try to choose foods where less than a third of the total fat is present as saturated fat.





Fibre

Otherwise known as non starch polysaccharide, the indigestible type of complex carbohydrate found in cereals, fruit and vegetables. Fibre containing foods are essential for good digestion and a low intake is a common cause of constipation. Good sources of dietary fibre are wholemeal bread, wholegrain breakfast cereals, beans and lentils as well as fruit and vegetables.



Sodium

Main dietary source is in salt, chemically known as sodium chloride. It is widely used in foods as a preservative and flavouring. Most people in the UK eat far too much sodium or salt. About 70% of the sodium we eat comes from salt and other chemicals added to processed foods. Good advice is to use small amounts of salt in cooking, do not add extra salt at table and cut down on the use of salty processed foods. Choose reduced salt alternatives when possible.

Vitamin A

A fat soluble vitamin necessary for healthy vision, skin and bones. Vitamin A, retinol, is found in animal products, especially dairy foods. Carotene, the pigment in many fruits and vegetables including carrots and peppers, is converted into retinol in the body and is also an important anti-oxidant. Children who avoid dairy products, fruit and vegetables are likely to have a low vitamin A intake.

Vitamin C

A water soluble vitamin and anti-oxidant essential for a healthy body and immune system. Vitamin C is found in fruit, vegetables, potatoes and fruit juices. Eating 5-a-day portions of fruit and vegetables is a good way to ensure an adequate Vitamin C intake.

Folate/Folic Acid

A water soluble vitamin vital for normal growth, red blood cell formation and wound healing. Low dietary intakes can lead to anaemia. Good dietary sources are green leafy vegetables, citrus fruits and folate fortified bread and cereals.

Calcium

A mineral essential for healthy bones and teeth. Important sources are milk and dairy foods. Good intakes during childhood are essential for long-term bone health. Children should be eating 2-3 servings a day of calcium rich dairy foods – milk, yoghurt, fromage frais and cheese. Anyone following a milk free diet should be especially careful to ensure a good calcium intake from eating enough calcium enriched foods or take a daily calcium supplement.

Iron

A mineral essential for healthy red blood cells. Iron is an essential part of the pigment haemoglobin in red blood cells. Low intake can lead to iron deficiency and anaemia causing tiredness and apathy. Good sources of iron are red meat, oily fish, wholegrain cereals, beans and lentils. The haemoglobin found in red meat is easily absorbed into the body. Avoiding red meat is a common cause of iron deficiency.

Zinc

A mineral essential for growth, repair, wound healing and the immune system. Many children have low zinc intakes. Good dietary sources are meat, milk, cheese, wholegrain cereals, eggs, beans and lentils. Vegetarians and vegans should include non-meat sources of zinc regularly in the diet.

