



# Guidance

## Preparing varied and tasty menus

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### Cooking healthier food

You should:

- ask suppliers for nutritional information for their products and read food labels to select those with lower amounts of fat, saturated fat, salt and sugars
- review the menus and food offering with your caterer on a regular basis
- take action to limit the fat, sugar and salt content of recipes
- trim visible fat from meat and remove skin from poultry
- avoid frying or roasting, if this is unavoidable, use spray oils
- skim fat from the surface of liquids
- roast or grill on a rack or trivet rather than cooking in a flat oven tray
- thicken soups and sauces with pureed vegetables or reductions, rather than adding extra flour and fat
- use lower fat vinaigrette or yoghurt dressings instead of mayonnaise
- not add salt when boiling starchy foods or vegetables
- try to halve the amount of sugar suggested in recipes. Or use fresh or dried fruit in dishes instead of sugar
- always ensure there is a strong process in place to check and manage allergies

### Varied menus

Think about the diversity of the school's population when designing menus, including provision for dietary, cultural and medical needs including allergies.

You should:

- develop menus that appeal and are familiar to key stage 1 children
- keep it simple to make it easier for children to choose their meal - this results in smaller queues
- consult children, parents and catering staff on menu changes
- consider the language used to describe food. Make it engaging for children, and make it clear to parents what their children are eating
- relate menus to lessons and other activities across the school to help get pupils excited about the food on offer
- ensure meals meet [legal requirements on food standards](#)
- find out more on the [Soil Association's Food for Life Catering mark](#).

### Universal infant free school meals

You should:

- consider how you are going to encourage take-up. For example, hold parents' tasting sessions, send multiple letters home, provide communication from front line staff answering questions about meal options and provision
- continue to register children for benefits-related free school meals in order to protect pupil premium funding
- talk to parents about menus and how supervisory staff support children to eat meals
- encourage parents to join their child for school lunches via drop-in sessions. Tell parents if your caterer has a quality assurance mark (for example, Food for Life Catering Mark)
- review the dining and general lunchtime experience from a child's perspective, including seating plans to make it more welcoming

### Homemade food

You could:

- consider making popular foods like burgers and sausages from scratch. Such homemade offerings are usually healthier than the pre-made products sold by suppliers
- use the same mince used for a burger to make a meatloaf, meatballs or a ragout, for example
- read food labels to choose lower fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt products

When buying food, ask suppliers for nutritional information and choose those which are marked as low or medium in fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt (sodium).

Portion sizes given on the product label may not be appropriate for children, so use the portion size checklist provided.

### Food labelling guidelines for fat, saturated fat, salt and sugar per 100g

These guidelines should be used, even if the food is sold by volume.

Nutrient	Low per 100g	Medium per 100g	High per 100g	High per portion
Fat	3.0g or less	3.0 or 17.5g	More than 17.5g	More than 21.0g
Saturated Fat	1.5g or less	1.5 or 5.0g	More than 5.0g	More than 6.0g
Sugar	5.0g or less	5.0 or 22.5g	More than 22.5g	More than 27.0g
Salt	0.3g or less	0.3 or 1.5g	More than 1.5g	More than 1.8g

Sodium from all sources expressed as salt (1g sodium = 2.2g salt)

### Criteria for drinks (per 100ml)

Nutrient	Low per 100g	Medium per 100g	High per 100g	High per portion
Total fat	1.5g or less	1.5 or 8.75g	More than 8.75g	More than 10.5g
Saturated fat	0.75g or less	0.75 or 2.5g	More than 2.5g	More than 3.0g
Total sugars	2.5g or less	2.5 or 11.25g	More than 11.25g	More than 13.5g
Salt	0.3g or less	0.3 or 0.75g	More than 0.75g	More than 0.9g

Sodium from all sources expressed as salt (1g sodium = 2.2g salt)

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