



# My child eats healthily

Nutritional recommendations  
from the Nutrition Commission  
of the Austrian Association for  
Child and Youth Medicine for  
children aged one to three



Medical specialist  
for children & adolescents  
aged 0-18



## Dear parents!

The first 1,000 days of your child's life are crucial for long-term health. A healthy diet appropriate to the child's age is thus crucial. As parents, you can play a key part in giving your child a good start in life and enabling healthy development.

Towards the end of their first year, young children increasingly join in with family meals. They need plenty of sugar-free drinks and plant-based foods (fruit, vegetables, cereals, potatoes, pasta, rice). Surveys show that toddlers eat too many animal products (meat, cold cuts, dairy) and too much sugar, which can lead to excess weight. One in four children in Austria are overweight – and the trend is on the rise.

So it is all the more important to start looking after your child's health early on. Parents and other people who look after your children are particularly responsible, because they set the example and can teach your children how to choose a healthy diet!

This brochure by the Austrian child and youth health association – the Österreichische Gesellschaft für Kinder- und Jugendheilkunde (ÖGKJ) – provides nutritional recommendations tailored to the particular needs of children aged 1 to 3, and tells you about the important nutrients.



## Nutritional recommendations for children aged 1-3

- 1) Drinks – how much fluid does my child need?
- 2) Infant milk or cow's milk – interesting points about protein
- 3) Vegetables and fruit – with every meal
- 4) Whole grain products, eggs, legumes – good sources of folic acid
- 5) Vitamin D for the bones
- 6) Fish and healthy fats
- 7) Can I raise my child as a vegetarian?
- 8) How much sugar is permitted?
- 9) Meat and cold cuts – important sources of iron
- 10) Salt – yes or no?





## Infant milk or cow's milk – interesting points about protein

Children aged between 1 and 3 often consume more protein than they need. This protein comes primarily from dairy products (milk, cheese, yoghurt, etc.) and to a lesser extent from meat and cold cut products.

Excessive protein in the first years of life is shown to result in a higher proportion of body fat and subsequent obesity. The recommended upper limit of milk consumption for your young child is therefore 1/3 litres per day, including dairy products such as yoghurt.

Compared with traditional cow's milk, infant milk is a milk substitute that is promoted as meeting the nutritional needs of young children in the growth phase.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has established that infant milk products are no more effective in providing nutrients than other foodstuffs that form part of young children's normal diet. These foods include cow's milk, breakfast cereals, grains, fish and meat.

## Drinks – how much fluid does my child need?

The drink of first choice is tap water. An alternative is unsweetened tea. Sugary drinks (fizzy drinks, fruit nectar, cordial) are high in calories, resulting in obesity and tooth decay. They do not form part of a healthy diet!

100% fruit juices naturally contain sugar and so should be highly diluted (1-2 parts fruit juice to 6 parts water).

Drinks should preferably be offered from a child's beaker rather than from a feeding bottle.



### RECOMMENDATION:

Approx. 800 ml of fluids daily, divided into 6 to 7 portions, preferably tap water or unsweetened drinks.

### RECOMMENDATION:

- 3 portions of milk and dairy products
- 1 portion corresponds to 125 ml of cow's milk (one small cup) or
  - 100 g yoghurt or
  - 50 g quark/cottage cheese/cheese spread or
  - 20 g cheese
- Special infant milk products are unnecessary.





## Vegetables and fruit – with every meal

Offer your children fruit and vegetables several times each day. They should form a part of every meal. Ensure you serve seasonal and regional products and offer your child a varied menu. Vegetable varieties include peas, fennel, cauliflower, broccoli, spinach and berries, which are exceptionally rich in folic acid.

### RECOMMENDATION:

- Vegetables and fruit daily, 5 portions per day (1 portion with every meal)
- 3 portions of vegetables and/or legumes, 2 portions of fruit
- 1 portion corresponds to around the size of your child's palm

## Whole grain products, eggs, legumes – important sources of folic acid

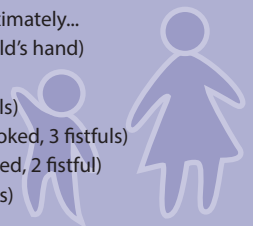
Folic acid is important before and after pregnancy, and for babies, in terms of blood formation, cell division and the regeneration of cells in the human body.

Studies show that children aged between 1 and 3 consume far too little folic acid, which results in fatigue, poor appetite, gastro-intestinal complaints and abnormalities in terms of blood count. The regular consumption of whole grain products and vegetables and fruit rich in folic acid as well as eggs can prevent a deficiency. But watch out for the sugar content of enriched foods (e.g. breakfast cereals)!



### RECOMMENDATION:

- 5 portions per day in the form of bread, breakfast cereals, cereal flakes, potatoes, rice or pasta
- one portion corresponds to approximately... (one measure is the size of your child's hand)
  - 30 g bread (1-1 1/2 palmful)
  - 30 g muesli/cereals (2 handfuls)
  - 120 g cooked pasta (40g uncooked, 3 fistfuls)
  - 90 g cooked rice (30g uncooked, 2 fistful)
  - 120 g boiled potatoes (2 fistfuls)
- 1 to 2 eggs per week







## Vitamin D for the bones

Vitamin D is essential for growing children's bone development and stimulates the immune system, which may have a positive impact on the development of auto-immune diseases (diabetes mellitus, rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis).

Vitamin D is formed in the skin as the result of exposure to sunlight, which means that regular outdoor physical activity during the summer months ensures enough vitamin D is built up. Yet vitamin D deficiency is widespread. Studies show that 8 out of 10 children get too little vitamin D through their diet.

Children at risk of a vitamin D deficiency include those with a dark skin, children who do not get a lot of physical exercise in the fresh air and children suffering from chronic diseases.

Fish, eggs, cultivated mushrooms and enriched foods (cereals, milk) can improve vitamin D intake.

### RECOMMENDATION:

- Plenty of outdoor physical activity during the summer months will ensure your child gets all the vitamin D needed. Please note that the use of sun screen (SPF 30 or higher) and UV-protective clothing reduce the formation of vitamin D in the skin.
- For children aged between 1 and 3 who have an increased risk of vitamin D deficiency, the recommended intake is 800 IU of vitamin D per day.

## Fish and healthy fats

Polyunsaturated fats (Omega 3 fatty acids) are high-quality oils that play an important role in terms of the developing brain, and support your child's powers of concentration and ability to learn.

The use of high-quality oils rich in Omega 3 fatty acids, such as rapeseed oil, linseed oil and walnut oil is recommended. In addition, fatty saltwater fish (salmon, herring, mackerel) or native fish types (trout, char) 1 to 2 times a week support a healthy diet. Butter and margarine should be used in moderation.

### RECOMMENDATION:

- Fatty fish 1 to 2 portions per week,
- 1 portion corresponds to the size of your child's palm
- 1 teaspoon of good quality oil per day
- 1 teaspoon of spreadable fat (butter, margarine) per day

## Meat and cold cuts – important sources of iron

Iron is a particularly important mineral for blood formation and proper brain development and functioning. A deficiency can lead to anaemia and restricted cognitive capacity.

Iron deficiency can be prevented by eating meat and cold cuts 3 times per week. Lean meat is preferable. Raw meat and cold cuts products are not suitable for very young children (Beef Tatar, salami, raw ham etc.).

### RECOMMENDATION:

- Lean meat or lean cold cut varieties maximum 3 portions per week,
- 1 portion corresponds to the palm of your hand



## Can I raise my child as a vegetarian?

Yes. A balanced meat-free diet that includes dairy products and eggs meets the needs of a healthy growing child.

In a vegetarian diet, iron comes from plant sources (whole grains, legumes, soya products, nuts, seeds, dried fruits) rather than from meat. It is harder for the body to absorb this “plant-based” iron than iron from animal products. Children with a vegetarian diet may be at an increased risk of iron deficiency.

The ÖGKI does not recommend a purely plant-based, or vegan, diet.

### RECOMMENDATION:

Supplement vitamin C with fruit juice or vegetable varieties (broccoli, fennel) and preparation methods to improve the uptake of iron from plant-based foods.



## Salt – yes or no?

Alongside cow's milk, salt is the most important source of iodine in a young child's diet, and is important for thyroid function and mental development. You should therefore use only iodine-enriched salt in food. The basic rule is: use as little salt as possible because your child will quickly develop a taste for salty foods.

### RECOMMENDATION:

- Offer fewer salty foods such as cold cuts and salty snacks
- Use only iodine-enriched salt when preparing family meals



## How much sugar is permitted?

Between the ages of 1 and 3, children double their consumption of sweet products. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) the daily amount of sugar consumed by 2-3-year-olds should not exceed 27 grams. That corresponds to 9 cubes of sugar.

As well as sweets, food and drinks also contain sugar and are marketed to attract children in the form of cereals, ready meals, dairy or cold cuts products (“children's products”). These are enriched with vitamins and/or minerals and contain at least one extra portion of sugar to make them tastier for children. Excessive intake of sugar leads to obesity and can cause tooth decay.

### RECOMMENDATION:

Offer your child sweet things (incl. products targeted at children) only occasionally, max. once a day, and only in small quantities.



# Recommendations for your child

1. Tap water is the drink of choice
2. Maximum 1/3 litre of milk per day
3. Vegetables and fruit with every meal
4. VPlenty of outdoor physical activity in the summer months will provide your child with enough vitamin D
5. Fatty fish 1 to 2 times per week
6. Use high-quality oils
7. Use spreadable fats only sparingly
8. Lean cold cuts and meat varieties up to 3 times per week
9. Sweets maximum once a day
10. VUse iodine-enriched table salt



## Publication details:

Publisher: Österreichische Gesellschaft für  
Kinder- und Jugendheilkunde  
(ÖGKJ); Responsible for content:  
ÖGKJ Commission for Nutrition  
Version: April 2020

Medical specialist  
for children and adolescents  
aged 0-18