hcrg Care Group

BARNARDO'S

Supporting Children's Attention, Activity and Impulses

A practical toolkit for families and carers

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Physical Health: Food and Drink

Healthy food helps children's brains work well.

Try to:

- Eat regular meals
- Offer fruit and vegetables
- Offer water or milk to drink
- Avoid sugary drinks (including fruit juices)

➢ **Food can affect mood and energy.**

Source: NHS Eatwell Guide; NHS Healthy Eating Advice.

Physical Health: Food and Drink

The ‘Eatwell Guide’ (following page) shows that to have a healthy, balanced diet, people should try to:

- Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day.
- Base meals on higher fibre starchy foods like potato, rice, bread, or pasta.
- Have some dairy or dairy alternatives.
- Eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat, and other protein.
- Choose unsaturated oils and spreads and eat them in small amounts.
- High fats and sugars should be eaten less often and in small quantities.
- Drink plenty of fluids (at least 6 to 8 glasses per day).

Source: NHS Eatwell Guide; NHS Healthy Eating Advice.

Eatwell Guide

Use the Eatwell Guide to help you get a balance of healthier and more sustainable food. It shows how much of what you eat overall should come from each food group.

Check the label on packaged foods

Each serving (150g) contains

Energy	Fat	Saturates	Sugars	Salt
1046kJ 250kcal	3.0g	1.3g	34g	0.9g
	LOW	LOW	HIGH	MED
13%	4%	7%	38%	15%

of an adult's reference intake

Typical values (as sold) per 100g: 697kJ/ 167kcal

Choose foods lower in fat, salt and sugars

Fruit and vegetables

Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day

Raisins, Chopped tomatoes, Frozen peas

Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates

Choose wholegrain or higher fibre versions with less added fat, salt and sugar

Potatoes, Whole grain cereal, Cous Cous, Porridge, Whole wheat pasta, Bagels, Rice, Spaghetti

Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins

Eat more beans and pulses, 2 portions of sustainably sourced fish per week, one of which is oily. Eat less red and processed meat

Lentils, Beans lower salt and sugar, Tuna, Lean mince, Plain nuts, Chick peas

Dairy and alternatives

Choose lower fat and lower sugar options

Low fat soft cheese, Semi skimmed milk, Soya drink, Plain Low fat yoghurt

Oil & spreads

Choose unsaturated oils and use in small amounts

Veg Oil, Lower fat spread

Eat less often and in small amounts

Sauce, Crisps

6-8 a day

Water, lower fat milk, sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count.

Limit fruit juice and/or smoothies to a total of 150ml a day.

Per day 2000kcal 2500kcal = ALL FOOD + ALL DRINKS

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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Physical Health: Sleep

Sleep helps children to:

- Focus
- Manage feelings
- Learn
- Stay healthy

➢ **Most children need lots of sleep to grow well.**

Source: NHS Children's Sleep Information; The Sleep Charity.

Physical Health: Sleep

How much sleep do children need?

Sleep plays a vital role in children's physical, emotional, and cognitive wellbeing. Good quality sleep supports attention, emotional regulation, learning, and memory, and helps maintain a healthy immune system and overall physical health.

- **3 - 6 Years Old** 10 - 12 hours per day
- **7 - 12 Years Old** 10 - 11 hours per day
- **12 - 18 Years Old** 8 - 9 hours per day

Source: NHS Sleep Guidance; American Academy of Sleep Medicine sleep duration recommendations.

Physical Health: Sleep

What can help children be ready for sleep?

- A consistent, relaxing bedtime routine. For example, a bath and book before bed.
- Sleep at regular times. This helps brains and internal body clocks get used to a set routine.
- A sleep-friendly, ideally dark, quiet and tidy bedroom with no electronics.
- Switching off all mobile phones, tablets, or any other electronic device for at least 1 hour before bedtime. The blue light from screens has a proven negative effect on sleep.
- Consider a multi-vitamin that includes magnesium.

➢ **Keep a sleep diary. It may uncover habits or daily activities that contribute to sleeplessness.**

Source: NHS Sleep Hygiene Advice; The Sleep Charity.

Emotional Health and Wellbeing: Feelings and Emotions

It helps children to:

- Name feelings
- Talk about worries
- Practise ‘calm breathing’
- Take breaks

➢ **Remind children that ALL feelings are OK.**

Source: NHS Every Mind Matters; Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families.

Emotional Health and Wellbeing: Anxiety

Anxiety is a natural response that everyone experiences at times. For some children and young people, anxiety may be experienced more often, or more intensely due to differences in how their brains process information, sensory input, and uncertainty.

Many children feel anxious in situations that involve change, unpredictability, social interaction, sensory overload, or high demands. These responses are not a sign of weakness or misbehaviour; they are the body and brain responding to feeling overwhelmed or unsafe.

Anxiety can become more difficult to manage when feelings of worry or fear continue after the situation has passed, or when anxiety begins to interfere with daily activities such as learning, sleep, relationships, or wellbeing. Some children may not always express anxiety using words and may instead show it through withdrawal, increased movement, emotional outbursts, or other physical symptoms.

Source: NHS Anxiety Information; NICE guidance on mental wellbeing in children and young people

Emotional Health and Wellbeing: Low Mood

For some children and young people, low mood may be harder to recognise, as it can present through increased withdrawal, changes in behaviour, loss of interest in preferred activities, emotional flatness, or increased difficulties with emotional regulation rather than clear expressions of sadness.

Remember:

- It is common for young people to experience fluctuations in emotions
- Breathing and relaxation techniques (consider using apps such as Headspace)
- Focusing on the present moment (mindfulness)
- Challenging negative or unrealistic thinking through problem-solving
- Supporting the child or young person to consider other points of view and develop more helpful thoughts

Source: NHS Low Mood Information; Anna Freud Centre resources for children and young people.

Emotional Health and Wellbeing: When to ask for Support

Ask for support if:

- Low mood lasts a long time
- Worries stop daily life
- A child talks about hurting themselves

➢ **Support is important and available.**

Source: NHS Mental Health Services Guidance; NICE self-harm and mental health guidance.

Screen Time and Apps

Although screens are part of daily life, some useful tips for children are: .

- Set clear time limits
- Check age ratings
- Talk about online safety
- Keep screens out of bedrooms at night

Source: UK Chief Medical Officers' Commentary on Screen Use; Internet Matters.

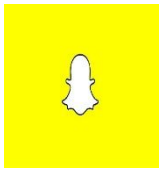
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Screen Time and Apps



Instagram Age 13+ years. The app provides a channel to share photographs of skills and daily life events. Content posted can be amplified using hashtags meaning masses can be reached in a matter of minutes.



Snap Chat Age 13+ years. Initially a private photo photo-sharing app. However, Snapchat features now include short videos, video chat, messaging, photo storage, generative AI and more. You can create a group chat to talk with friends or message individual friends. There is a risk of contract from potential harmful strangers, bullying and harassment, as well as disappearing messages that can be hard to collect as evidence in cases of bullying or other inappropriate behaviour.

Source: Internet Matters parent guides; platform safety and age-rating information (Instagram and Snapchat).

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Screen Time and Apps

TikTok Age 13+ years. Users can re-create content from dance challenges, to memes, about current events. While many are harmless and fun, there are others that need to be monitored closely. These challenges and trends can harm a child's physical health and mental wellbeing.

Discord Age 17+ years. A platform for people with similar interests to share and communicate. It is popular among the gaming community. You can type, talk, listen, and watch live videos of other users. There is also a 'Nearby' feature that allows you to add friends who have the location features on their device turned on that are physically nearby.

Roblox Age 13 + years. A platform for anyone to create and upload a game for all to use. Can permit online chats.

Source: Internet Matters; Common Sense Media; platform safety information (TikTok, Discord and Roblox).

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About Attention, Activity and Impulses



It is very common for children to:

- Find it hard to listen
- Have lots of energy
- Act before they think

Remember:

- Small changes can really help
- Support at home and school is best

➢ **Strategies should be used for at least three months before accessing further support.**

Source: NICE Guideline NG87 ADHD: Diagnosis and Management; NHS ADHD Information.

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About Attention, Activity and Impulses

Every child is different, some children:

- Need to move more
- Find it hard to focus
- Feel things very strongly

➢ **This does not mean something is wrong; it means their brain works in its own way.**

Children do best when:

- Adults notice their strengths, and share them
- Life feels calm and safe
- Boundaries and routines are clear

Source: NICE Guideline NG87; ADHD Foundation strength-based practice resources.

About Attention, Activity and Impulses

When your child:

- Gets distracted easily
- Forgets instructions
- Finds tasks hard to start
- Moves a lot or fidgets
- Talks a lot
- Finds waiting hard

➢ **Remember many children will do this at times, especially when tired, hungry, worried or upset.**

Source: NHS ADHD Information; NICE Guideline NG87.

About Attention, Activity and Impulses

Children with lots of energy often need planned movement.

Try:

- Playing outside every day
- Movement before homework
- Clear routines
- Visual timetables
- Kind words and encouragement

➢ **Try to look at what helps and improves things, not only at stopping unwanted behaviour.**

Source: NICE Guideline NG87 behavioural and environmental strategies; ADHD Foundation

About Attention, Activity and Impulses

For children who act quickly, learning self-control takes time.

Try:

- Clear and fair rules
- Timers and reminders e.g. visual / sand timer
- Praise for trying
- Warnings before any changes e.g. “5 more minutes”
- Calm spaces and learning ‘calm breathing’

➢ **Children learn best with patience and support.**

Source: NICE Guideline NG87 parent-training and behavioural interventions.

About Attention, Activity and Impulses: What Might Help?

Try:

- Clear routines
- Clear, simple boundaries
- Support both at home and school
- Time to see what works

For many children this is enough.

➢ **If worries stay after trying these ideas, more support could be explored.**

Source: NICE Guideline NG87; NHS ADHD support guidance.

How Will I Know Strategies are Working?

You may notice with your child:

- Fewer daily battles
- Easier routines
- More confidence
- A happier child and family

➢ **If things are still tricky after trying support, the support already tried at home and school will help professionals to understand what else may help.**

Source: NICE Guideline NG87 monitoring and outcome measures.

Getting Support

Where to start asking for help can feel confusing. Support can come from:

- School
- School Nurse
- Health Visitor
- GP
- Local parent groups
- Support charities

➢ **You are not alone.**

Source: NHS England Children and Young People's Services; Essex Family Wellbeing Service.

School Support

School can be hard for some children, working together with school helps:

- Talk often with school
- Share worries early
- Make plans together

At times, family concerns may not be fully recognised or understood, which can lead to feelings of frustration. This is unhelpful for everyone. Working together, and with shared understanding can help make sure children remain at the centre of all discussions and receive the support they need to thrive.

➢ **Education support services can help families to understand their children's education rights and choices.**

Source: SEND Code of Practice (2015); Department for Education SEND Guidance.

Support Services and Links

Essex Child & Family Wellbeing Service

Helps families access local health services in the community

www.essexfamilywellbeing.co.uk

Home Start Essex (West Essex)

Helps families with at least one child under 5 navigate life's most challenging moments

www.home-startessex.org.uk

ACL Essex Community & Family Learning

Free courses to parents and carers in Essex. Both online and in person courses

www.aclessex.com

Source: Organisation websites listed on this slide.

Healthier Together (NHS Parent Advice Hub)

Trusted, clinician-approved healthcare advice for pregnant women, parents, carers and young people

www.hwehealthiertogether.nhs.uk

Family Lives

Parenting and family support

www.coramfamilylives.org.uk

The Sleep Charity

Provide advice and support for better sleep

https://thesleepcharity.org.uk

Support Services and Links

Speech and Language UK – For Visuals

Visual items to support families.

https://speechandlanguage.org.uk

Mind in West Essex – Parent Support

Parent workshops and guidance around children's mental health.

www.mindinwestessex.org.uk

Mind in West Essex – Children and Young People Mental Health Support team (MHST)

Via mental health lead for schools, only for schools signed up to the MHST programme.

mhstadmin@mindinwestessex.org.uk

Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) CAMHS

Emotional wellbeing and mental health support for young people.

www.nelft.nhs.uk

Young Concern Trust (YCT)

Counselling and therapeutic support charity.

https://yctsupport.com

Internet Matters

Protect your child, with tips to benefit from screen time.

www.internetmatters.org

Source: Organisation websites listed on this slide.

Support Services and Links

Childnet

The latest advice and guidance on key online safety issues and latest apps and games.

https://childnet.com

Ordinarily Available: Targeted Support

The expected additional provision which is ordinarily available in mainstream schools for some children and young people who have been identified as having special educational needs.

https://eycp.essex.gov.uk

IPSEA (Independent Provider of Special Education Advice)

Support families to navigate the SEND system and secure the education children are legally entitled to.

www.ipsea.org.uk

Families InFocus Essex

Support and activity clubs for families who have children with any special educational need or disability (SEND).
www.familiesinfocusessex.org.uk

Source: Organisation websites listed on this slide.

References and Evidence Base

- NICE NG87 ADHD
- SEND Code of Practice (DfE)
- NHS Eatwell Guide
- NHS Every Mind Matters
- NHS Children's Sleep Information
- The Sleep Charity
- Internet Matters
- Anna Freud Centre
- Essex Family Wellbeing Service
- IPSEA

- p16–22 informed by NICE Guideline NG87: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Diagnosis and Management.
- p9–12:Mental health information is intended for general guidance and is not a substitute for professional assessment or treatment.
- p25–27:Links and services were correct at the time of publication and may be subject to change.