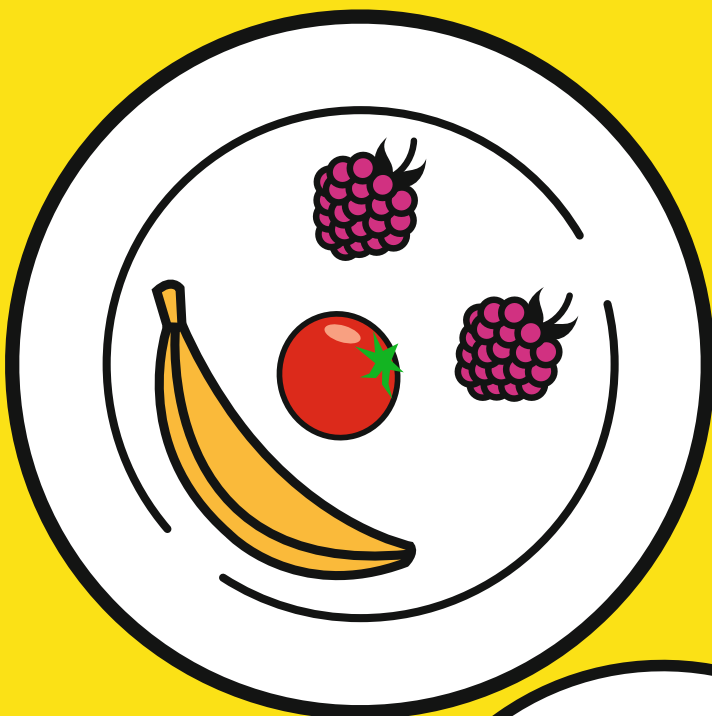


# Me Size Meals

# step by step !!

Your guide to a healthy  
and active family



me size meals

change  
4 life

Eat well Move more Live longer

# hi!

## And welcome to your Me Size Meals guide



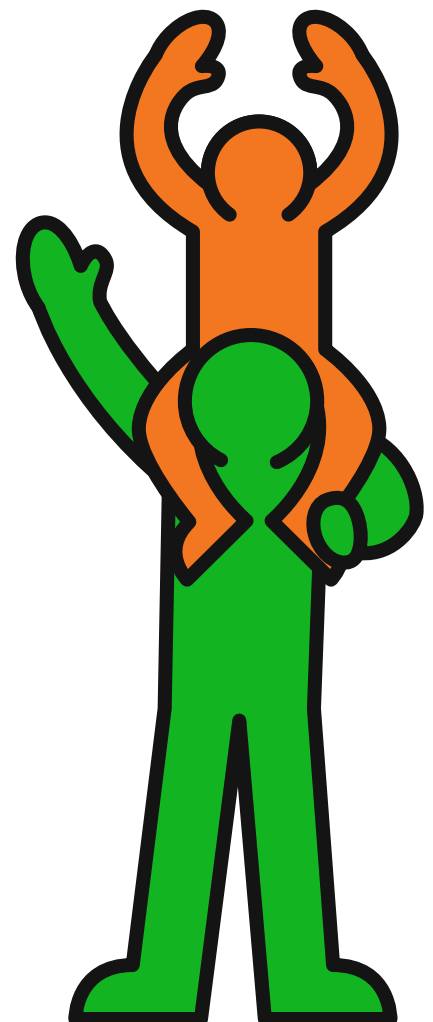
It's all too easy to fall in to the trap of giving kids portions that are too big for them these days. Everything seems to be getting bigger – cans and bottles of fizzy drink, pizzas, bags of crisps, even plates seems to be getting bigger and bigger!

So it's really important to think about how much you're giving the kids at snacktimes and mealtimes, so they don't just end up with the same amount of food as an adult does. And that's where this guide comes in – it will help you work out what the right amount is for your kids, as well as give you a few ideas on how to get kids thinking about what they're eating, and enjoying mealtimes rather than just wolfing down their food.

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This book is all about Me Size Meals – but don't forget, there are 7 other good habits to get into which are helping lots of other families get healthier and happier too. They are **Sugar Swaps**, **5 A DAY**, **Snack Check**, **Cut Back Fat**, **60 Active Minutes**, **Up and About** and **Meal Time** – if you need any info about them they're all on the website at [www.nhs.uk/change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life)



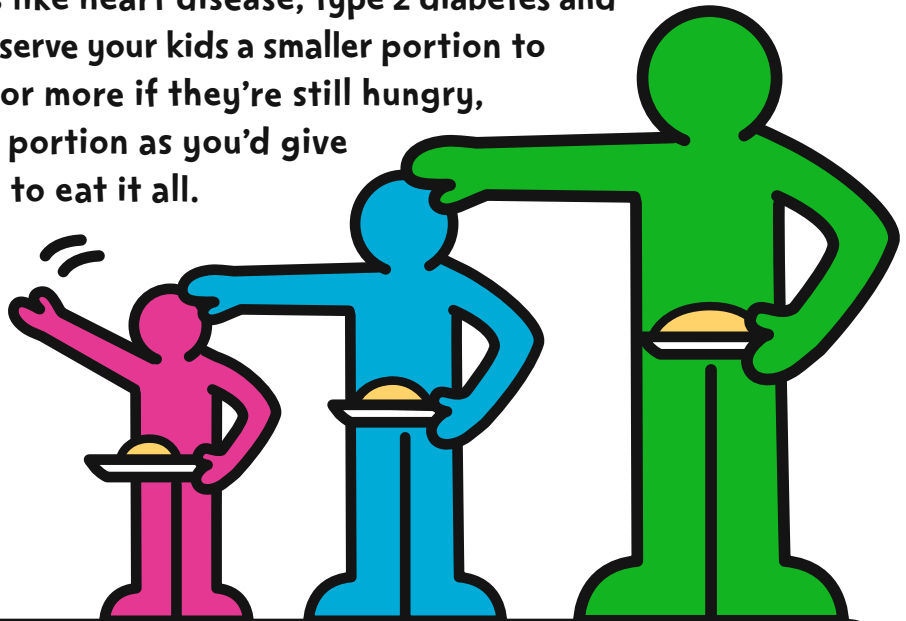


# what is me size meals?

**Me Size Meals is all about portion control and making sure your kids eat the right amount of food for their size and age.**

If they eat more than their bodies need, it converts to stored fat – which in later life can lead to diseases like heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers. So it's better to serve your kids a smaller portion to start with, and let them ask for more if they're still hungry, than give them the same size portion as you'd give a grown-up and expect them to eat it all.

Not only will this mean your kids are eating the right amount of food, it will mean less food waste too so the weekly shopping budget should go further.



## What problems do other parents face?



Pete and Sean

“Sean is quite a picky eater – he only seems to like sweet things and chips. So if I do find something he likes, I always put lots on his plate because I think at least he's eating something.”

“I have no idea what the right amount to feed the children is – they're both bigger and taller than most of their friends, so surely they need more food?”



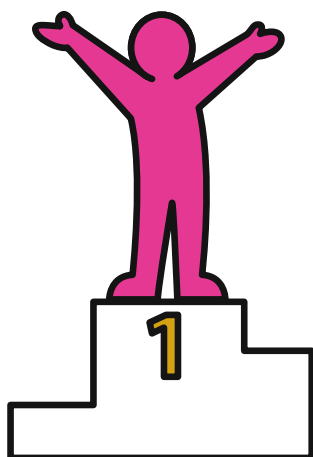
Emily and Sam

“Sam doesn't even seem to notice what he's eating or how much – whatever I give him he'll Hoover it up in about 2 seconds flat, so I don't think I can start giving him less now.”



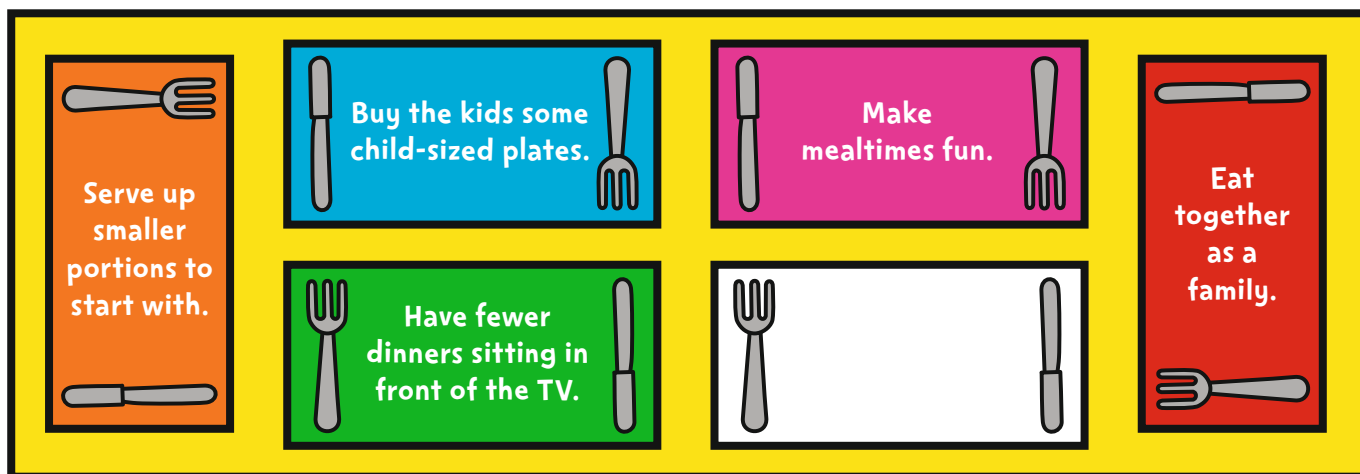
Lisa, Jack and Chloe

# what do you want to aim for?



Changing your kids' eating habits isn't easy – and it can be harder the older they are. So it's useful to figure out what you want from each habit, and what changes you want to see in the kids.

With Me Size Meals, the aim is obviously to make sure that everybody in your family is eating the right amount for their age and size. But there are also a few things you can do to help your kids enjoy the mealtime experience, so they concentrate more on what they're eating. Here are a few suggestions for ways to start them on the right track. If you can think of any more, why not write them down on the blank placemat? Then you'll have a reminder of what you're setting out to do.



## Look what other families wanted to achieve:



### Lisa wanted to cut down on Jack's tea

"I wanted to get out of the habit of giving Jack the same food as his dad. He loves to copy him and doesn't understand that he's half the size so needs less food! I bought a smaller, Jack-sized plate and now at dinnertime I put the food on the table and let them all serve themselves onto their own plates. This way Jack still



feels grown up and just like dad, but doesn't end up eating huge platefuls."

### Emily wanted her family to eat together more

"Sam loves eating at the table when all the family get together and he seems to eat much more slowly and nicely, rather than bolting it all down as usual - so he actually ends up eating less. With me working and everyone so busy though, it can be hard to arrange. Now I try and make sure that we eat together, just the 2 of us at the table, at least twice a week.



I try to arrange a meal with family or friends on Saturdays or Sundays too – and he really looks forward to it. It's like a proper occasion once a week."



# the warm up!



What have you got to lose?

**NOW** is a great time to start!



Give it a go!

The kids are back at school, so now is a great time to introduce a few extra healthier habits into their routine.

## Big does NOT equal strong!

We were all told when we were growing up to eat everything on our plates if we wanted to grow up 'big and strong'. And our grandparents said it to our parents. But that's because there was less food around in those days so it was very important to have a clean plate. Nowadays, there's more food and bigger portions so we need to be careful our kids don't eat too much.

## In the know!

Let the kids know that you're going to be trying a few new activities and ways of eating, and why. If they know why it's important, they're much more likely to be co-operative and might even be excited about getting healthier!

## We love leftovers!

If what you make doesn't all get eaten, don't worry - there are LOADS of ways to use up leftovers. (See page 11).

## Clean plates are not compulsory!

It doesn't matter if the kids don't eat everything on their plates - if they're full, that's ok.

## Give yourselves a pat on the back!

Encouragement works wonders for us all. If you and the kids are doing well at the changes you've decided on, then let yourselves know! Let the kids know they're doing well, and congratulate yourself too.

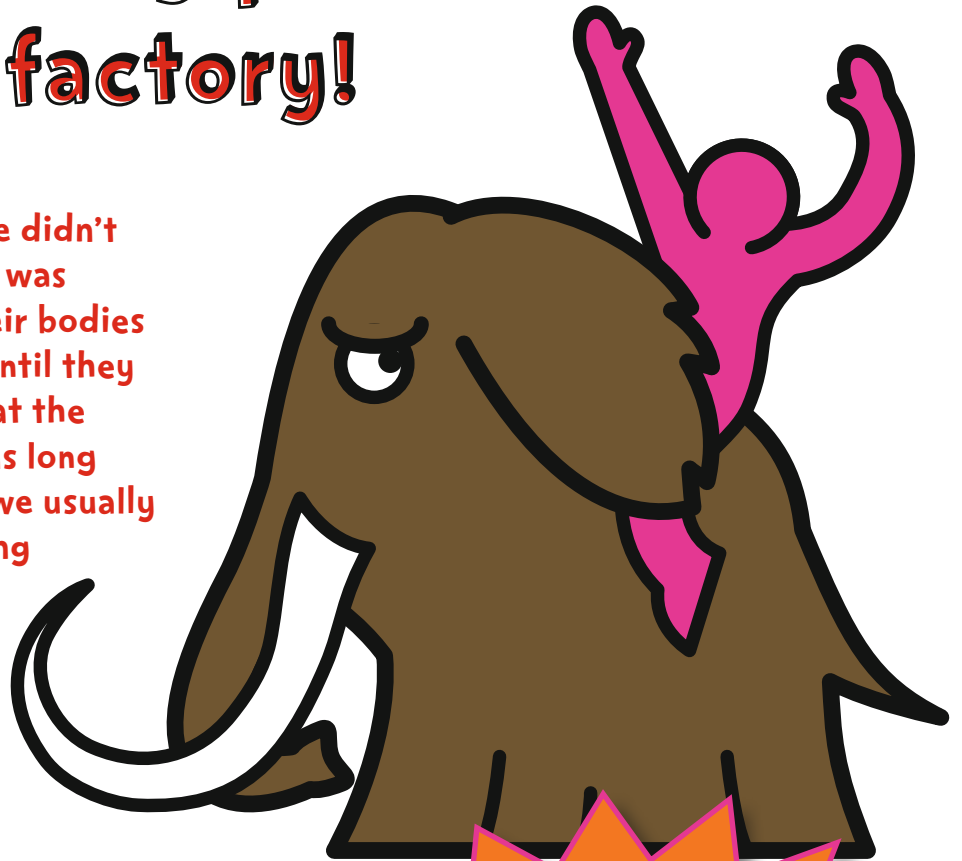
**Ready,  
Set,**





# the scary portions fact factory!

When we were cavemen we didn't know where the next meal was going to come from, so their bodies were programmed to eat until they were completely full so that the food would last them for as long as necessary. These days, we usually know when we're next going to eat so we should ignore the urge to eat until we're completely full. Instead we should try to organise our days around 3 regular mealtimes!



It can take a little while for the signal which tells us we're full to get from our tummies to our brains. So if kids eat more slowly, they won't eat more than they need.

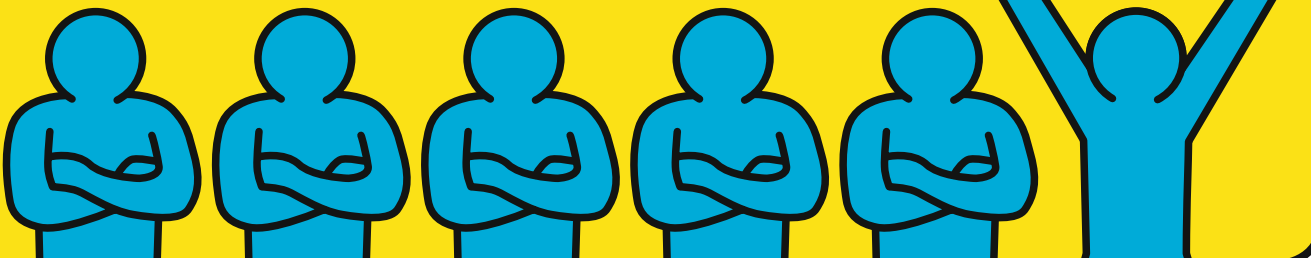
Cereal bowls can be much bigger these days, and we may be filling them to the top without thinking about it.



But remember that the kids are likely to be copying us. An easy solution is to start using smaller bowls.



It can take several goes over a period of time before your brain decides you like it! So don't let the kids give up on broccoli, or anything else that's good for them!





# bleugh!

Eating too much can lead to a few nasty things happening in our kids' bodies which can affect them later in life. If they're struggling to understand why you're making changes to their diet, why not have a look at the diagram below together? It might help them realise why it's important to eat well now.

## Tummy

This is where the food goes when we've just eaten it. If we eat too much, kids' tummies expand which can be a bit uncomfortable.

## Heart disease

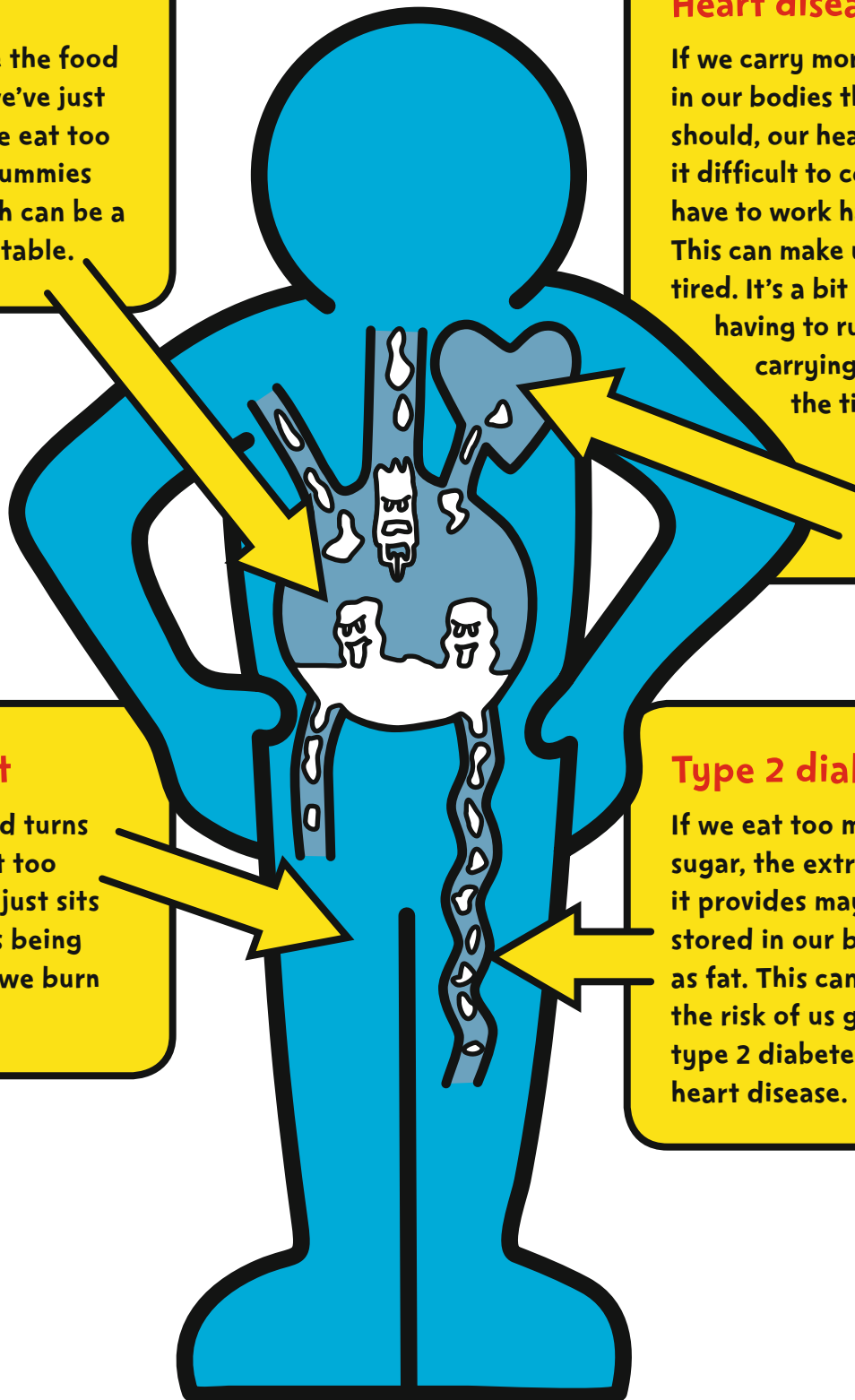
If we carry more fat in our bodies than we should, our hearts find it difficult to cope and have to work harder. This can make us feel tired. It's a bit like you having to run around carrying a sofa all the time!

## Stored fat

It's what food turns into if we eat too much, and it just sits in our bodies being gloopy until we burn it off.

## Type 2 diabetes

If we eat too much sugar, the extra energy it provides may be stored in our bodies as fat. This can increase the risk of us getting type 2 diabetes or heart disease.





# top 10 easy starts

There are a few simple things you can do to help your kids eat the right amount for their age and size and they're such little changes they should fit right into your existing routine.

1

Remember that kids' tummies are smaller than adults', so they need less food to make them full. So don't fall into the trap of serving up the same size plateful for everyone in the family.



2

Find or buy some child-sized plates and bowls. Plates and bowls are made bigger than ever now, so of course when you put a child's portion on an adult's plate it doesn't look anywhere near enough. When you start serving them meals on proper sized plates, it will be much easier to tell if they have too much.

3

Get the kids to eat at the table rather than in front of the TV. Watching TV while they eat distracts them and they could end up not noticing the signal from their tummy telling them that they're full up - so they may end up eating too much.



4

Be careful of pre-packaged portions. Most things come in adult sizes, so don't just give a whole portion to a child. For example, let them share a bag of crisps, or keep some back for later.

5

Set up a regular mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack time when the kids are at home, and give them a healthy little snack. This means that their bodies get trained to think that regular food is coming, and they don't tend to overeat at mealtimes.

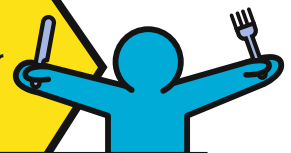


6

Let the kids watch you serve the meals. This way they are more likely to understand the different portion sizes for different ages.

7

Give them less rather than more to start with - they can always ask for seconds. This way you'll have less waste and they won't eat too much.



8

If you're worried they're not getting a balanced diet because they're picky eaters, encourage them to try a mouthful of everything on the plate, rather than to eat it all up and have a clean plate.

9

Don't worry if they don't have a clean plate and they say they're full - it just means they probably are full! Your kids won't starve - if they're hungry, they'll probably eat - whatever you put in front of them.



10

If the kids say they're hungry as you're cooking, give them a glass of water or juice to fill them up, rather than a snack that could ruin their appetite. It really WILL stop them being hungry for a little while and it means they'll eat all of the Me Size Meal you give them.

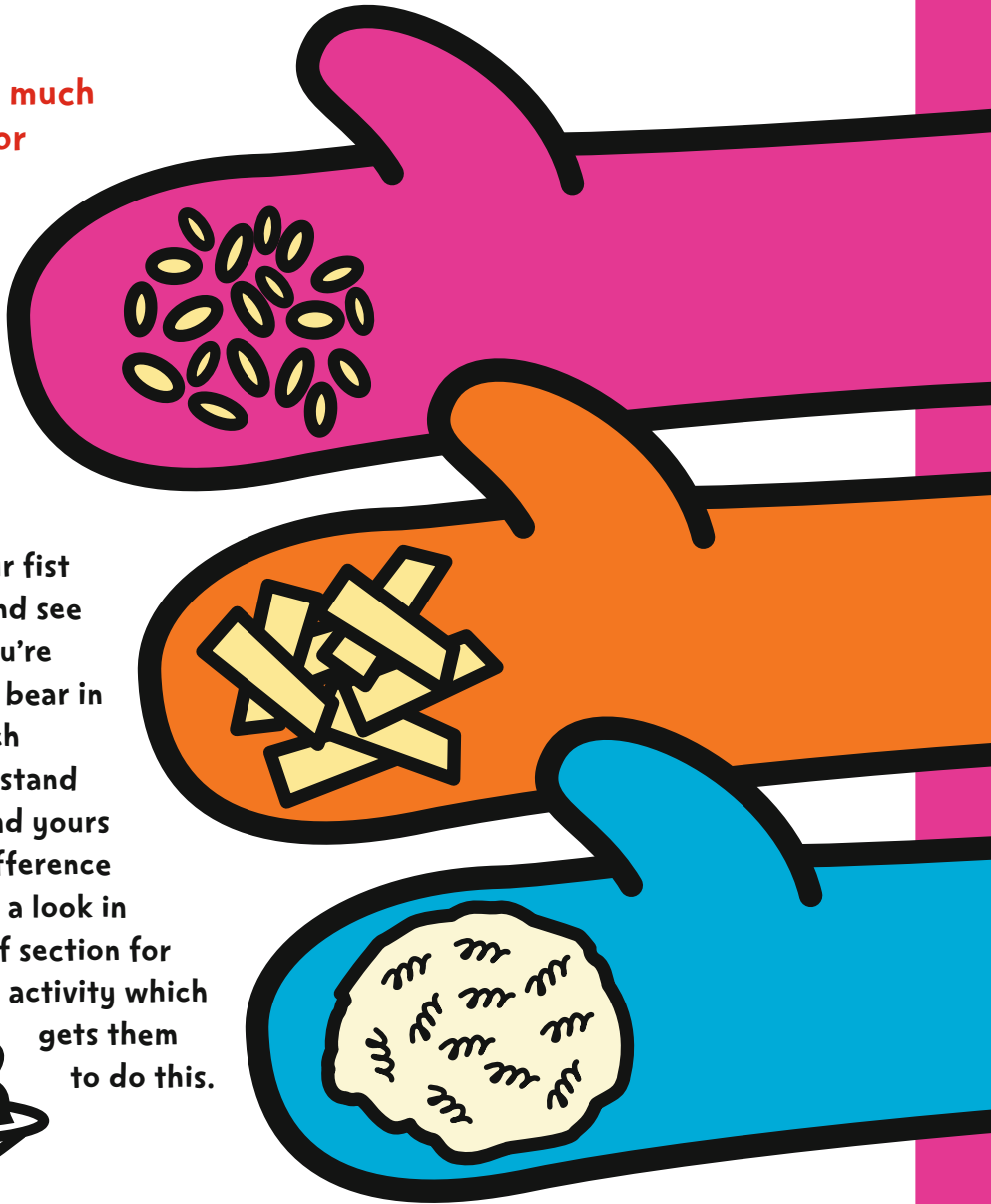
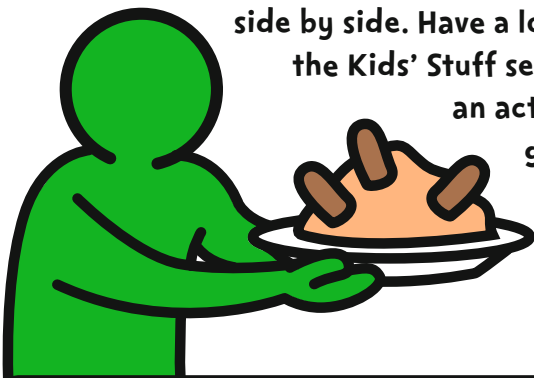


# portion control

If can be tricky to work out how much everybody in the family needs for their size. It seems obvious, but a 5 year old needs less than a 10 year old, and a 10 year old needs less than an adult. And as kids grow at different rates, there's no solid rule for each age that says 'give them this much'.

So the best thing to do is look at your fist in comparison with your kids' fists and see how much smaller they are. When you're working out how much to give them, bear in mind that their tummies are this much smaller too. It can help kids to understand this by drawing round their hands and yours

and looking at the difference side by side. Have a look in the Kids' Stuff section for an activity which gets them to do this.



## Food that grows

It can be especially difficult to work out 'expanding' food like pasta and rice. So try and use something to measure it out with. A very rough guide is about a handful of uncooked pasta for a child, and 2 handfuls for each adult. If you find an amount that works for your family, figure out how much it is by measuring it out in a particular cup or mug. Then, you'll be able to make exactly the same amount next time.





## next step ideas

Once you've established the basic habits, why not try a few of these ideas to make sure you get as much good stuff into the kids as possible? Getting them to realise how important food is as well as how much fun it is, will set them up to have a healthy attitude and a healthy diet for the rest of their lives.

Don't forget that all kids need 60 Active Minutes every day – so why not get them running around before dinner!

### Making food fun!

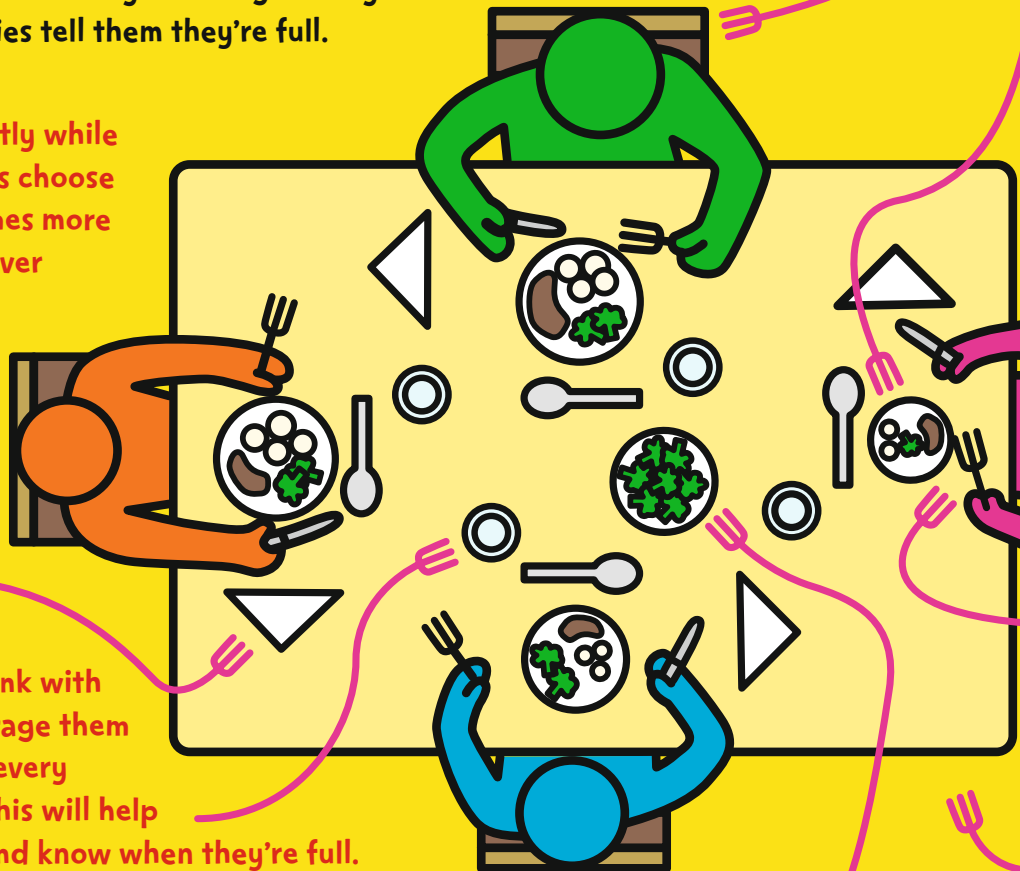
- Start getting together when you can to have a proper, sit-down family meal with no TV! It will help your kids to think of mealtimes as an enjoyable occasion and food as something to be appreciated. Plus, it helps them to eat more slowly and think about what they're eating so they listen when their tummies tell them they're full.

- Put some music on quietly while you eat, and let the kids choose it. They'll enjoy mealtimes more so will take their time over their food.

- Get them to help you set the table so they feel important and part of the whole mealtime process.

- Give them a healthy drink with their dinner and encourage them to take little sips after every couple of mouthfuls – this will help them eat more slowly and know when they're full.

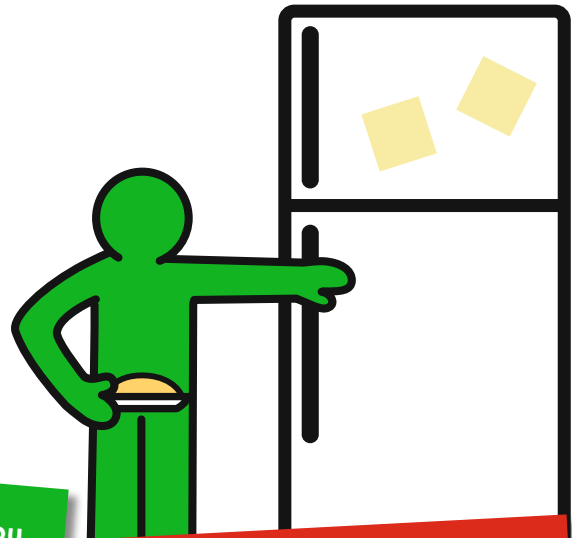
- Put the dishes on the table with spoons and let the kids serve themselves and you, asking them to think about how big everyone's tummy is and how much they need. This will make them feel involved and help them understand portion control.





# storage tips

Buy a few useful storage items, so if you do have leftovers, you've got somewhere to put them. It's not a good idea to put tins in the fridge, so pop things like unused beans or tomatoes into a bowl and cover instead.



Buy some cheap plastic boxes and freezer bags – really handy for the freezer as well as the fridge.

Use smaller lunchboxes if you make the kids packed lunches – they don't need huge ones because their lunch will just roll around inside.

Keep cling film at home so you can wrap up uneaten sandwiches or cover undrunk drinks.

Child-sized anything is great as a guide for portions – flasks, cups, plates and bowls all come in little person sizes.

- Arrange the food on the plates in pictures or faces. It will make it more appealing to little eyes so they eat it up – veggies and all.
- Space the food out on the kids' plates so they can see what they've got, rather than in a big pile.
- Encourage them to cut their food up properly and chew it before they swallow it. This might sound old-fashioned, but it's really good for digestion and will help them to eat more slowly and take the time to think about whether they're full or not, rather than just eating for the sake of it.
- Don't let the kids get down from the table until you've finished too! Not only will you be able to finish your dinner in your own time, it means that they learn that they don't have to bolt their food.



## Leftovers recipe!

This recipe is great for any kind of leftover veg mixed with leftover mashed potato.

### Bubble and squeak

- Mash up the cooked veggies (broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, leeks and carrots are all good), or chop them into small bits.
- Mix together with the mashed potato in a big bowl.
- Take about a handful of the mixture, make it into a burger shape, and put it in a frying pan with a small spoonful of oil in it. Keep doing this until you've run out of mixture, or there's no more room on the bottom of the pan.
- Fry for about 5 minutes on either side, or until the 'potato cakes' start to go golden brown. You'll need to use a fish slice to turn them over halfway through.

These are yummy served with salad or lower sugar baked beans.



# me size meals in a jiffy

Use ingredients that are easy to 'count' for your kids' meals sometimes, so you can work out portion sizes. For example, if you're doing sausages and mash and dad's having 3 sausages, then chances are the kids will only need one each. Try this Me Size alternative to fish and chips – but remember to grill the fishfingers as it's much healthier than frying.

## Fishfinger faces

- Count out one fishfinger for every 5 years of the child's age. So a 5 year old would have one, a 10 year old would have 2, and so on.
- Slice up a courgette and a carrot into circles.
- Cut up a potato into wedges – there's no need to peel it first.
- Put the potato wedges, the carrot and the courgette into an ovenproof dish, pour over a little bit of oil and put in the oven on a medium heat for about 20 minutes, along with the fishfingers.
- Serve as faces, with the wedges for mouths, the carrot and courgette for hair and eyes and the fishfingers as a bowtie or collar.

## Turkey burgers

Turkey is great-value and nutritious – plus it has less fat than many other types of meat. These burgers are ideal for a money-saving meal that all the family will enjoy.

### What you need

500g extra lean minced turkey  
1 small onion  
1 average-size courgette  
1 egg yolk  
Black pepper



### Step 1

Grate the onion and courgette, and mix them with the turkey mince, egg yolk and pepper.

### Step 2

Divide the mixture into 4 lumps and shape them into burgers with your hands.

### Step 3

Turn your grill on to a medium setting. Put a sheet of foil on your grill rack and arrange the burgers on it.

### Step 4

When the grill is hot, cook the burgers until they're nice and brown – this will probably take 6 or 7 minutes for each side. When you think they're done, cut into one to check it's cooked in the middle. Then serve with salad in a wholemeal bun, or with veg and a baked potato.



# one for the weekend

When all the family are eating together, it's nice to have a 'one-pot' dish, like a stew that you can serve up at the table. You can spoon out me-sized portions to everyone in turn. Counting spoonfuls out loud will help the kids understand that people of different ages get different-sized portions.

Try keeping the portions on the small side first time round, but leave the pot on the table – then the kids can ask for more if they're still hungry. And, of course, make sure the pot isn't hot enough to hurt little fingers – perhaps put the food into a cooler serving dish before you take it to the table.

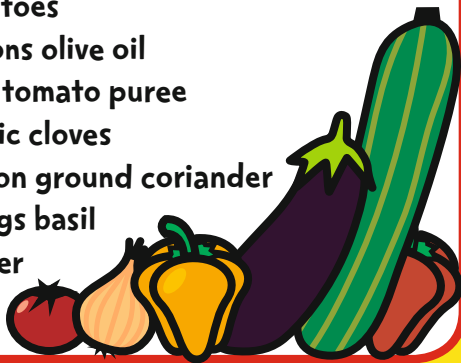


## Ratatouille

This is a French stew made with lots of veg – it's delicious hot or cold. Our version uses less oil than a traditional ratatouille.

### What you need

- 2 medium courgettes
- 1 medium aubergine
- 1 red pepper
- 1 yellow pepper
- 2 medium onions, red or white
- 6 ripe tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon tomato puree
- 2 large garlic cloves
- 1/4 teaspoon ground coriander
- 2 large sprigs basil
- Black pepper



### Step 1

Put your oven on to 220°C, 440°F or gas mark 7. Chop the ends off the courgettes and aubergines and skin the onions. Remove the stalk from the peppers and chop them in two so you can take all the seeds out. Now chop all the veg up into 1.5cm chunks.

### Step 2

Put all the veg (except the aubergine) in a roasting tin and pour the oil over them. Stir them around to spread the oil out and then mix the aubergine in. Once the oven is hot, cook the veg, taking them out every 10 minutes or so to turn them over.

### Step 3

When the veg are starting to go soft and have browned a little, transfer them to a large saucepan. Crush the garlic cloves and tear up the leaves from one of the basil sprigs – then add these to the veg with the tomato puree, pepper and coriander. Put a lid on the pan and cook the mixture on the hob until it turns pulpy – this will probably take between 20 and 40 minutes.

### Step 4

Serve onto plates and sprinkle a few more torn basil leaves on top. This is a great accompaniment to grilled meat, or it can be served with pasta or some crusty wholemeal bread, or just on its own.



## problem page



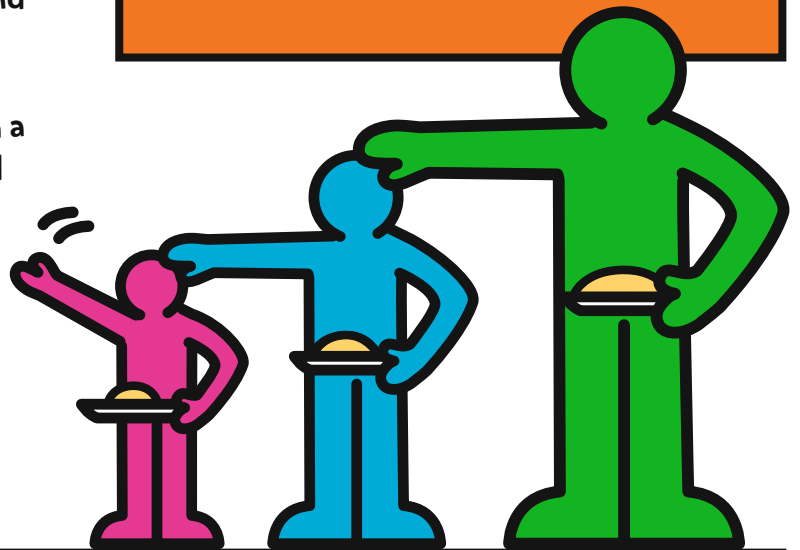
**Q** I think my kids eat too much! I've tried giving smaller portions and letting them ask for seconds. What do I do if they say they're still hungry, even after a second helping?

**A** It can be difficult to refuse our kids – we're conditioned to think that the more we feed them, the more we love them! But of course this isn't true. If they're still hungry after second helpings then you could try getting them to eat much slower. It could be that they're eating their food so fast that their brains don't have time to catch up with their tummies and they don't realise they're full.

Make sure you're giving them the right kind of food that releases energy slowly too, rather than foods which don't have much goodness in. Another trick is to give them a healthy drink after their first helping and then tell them that if they're still hungry afterwards they can have a bit more – the drink in between will make them feel full.

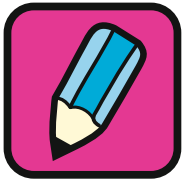
**Q** What can I give my son for breakfast that will keep him going until lunchtime?

**A** Breakfast is really important as it gives kids energy for the day. Try and avoid the cereals that have a lot of added sugar and salt in them – instead go for wholewheat versions that have no added salt or sugar, and sweeten them with chopped up fruit. Boiled egg and wholewheat toast soldiers are a good breakfast option, as is porridge with chopped up fruit as they are both 'slow-release' options. This means that they release energy slowly over the morning, so your son will feel full for longer.



**Q** I've got 3 sons, and the smallest one just wants to copy his older brothers all the time – especially when it comes to mealtimes! He can't understand why he has to have a smaller portion. What can I do?

**A** The first thing to do is to explain about how bodies of different ages are different sizes, and to get him to look at the difference in the size of his fist compared with his brothers. The hand drawing activity in the Kids' Stuff section will be useful for this. You can also get him to look at the diagram on page 7 – maybe read it with him and explain what too much food can do. It might also be helpful to make him Head of Portion Police and make it his job to dish up everyone's dinner and work out how much they need so he feels involved in the decision.



# things to try this week

This week, why not try an idea a day to help the kids eat the right amount? Once you've tried them all once for practice, see if you can introduce them all into your routine all the time - it will really make a difference.



Today	We will...
Monday	...all eat together and we won't have the TV on.
Tuesday	...make sure we have a healthy drink with our meals.
Wednesday	...look at how big we are compared with each other, and make sure our portions are not too big for us.
Thursday	...only have snacks which are the right size for us, so we might share some things.
Friday	...cook a 'one-pot' meal from page 12 or 13 and count spoonfuls out loud.
Saturday	...go shopping for some special, me-sized plates and bowls.
Sunday	...have a meal with the whole family round the table.



## Want to find out more?

For more information on Change4Life, and ways to get healthy and active visit [www.nhs.uk/change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life)

If you'd like more advice on healthy eating, see [www.eatwell.gov.uk](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk) or visit [www.5aday.nhs.uk](http://www.5aday.nhs.uk)

## What's happening near you?

Remember to look in your local newspapers for activities that are going on near you that you can get involved with. You can also visit [www.nhs.uk/change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life) and click on the 'My local area' section on the homepage.

Swim4Life – find out where your kids can swim for free:  
[www.culture.gov.uk/freeswimming](http://www.culture.gov.uk/freeswimming)

Have a look at your local cycle routes: [www.ctc.org.uk](http://www.ctc.org.uk) Or visit <http://new.britishcycling.org.uk/skyride> for information about group rides in your area.

## How to give your support

If you're already involved in children's activities in your area, or you'd like to help out where you can, we'd like to invite you to become a Local Supporter. We'll provide you with a toolkit that can help you run your own events and programmes under the Change4Life banner, plus lots of general guidance on how to get the people in your neighbourhood more active and eating more healthily.

To find out more, please visit [www.nhs.uk/change4life/Pages/PartnerTools.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life/Pages/PartnerTools.aspx)

Don't forget to put this book into your binder!  
If you don't have one, see the letter to order.

