



Nutrition Guidelines for Food Parcels

These Nutrition Guidelines were developed by Healthy Ireland in partnership with **safefood**, the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI).

Introduction

Access to a nutritionally adequate diet is a basic human right as set out by the United Nations (UN). The direct provision of food is an ever increasing response to food poverty in our communities and it is important that the food provided helps meet the nutritional needs of households.

Some people may have been experiencing food poverty already or some may be facing challenges in accessing food. These Guidelines are for organisations and groups who are providing food parcels to households in Ireland in response to food poverty. They provide guidance on how to ensure food parcels contain a balance of healthy foods.

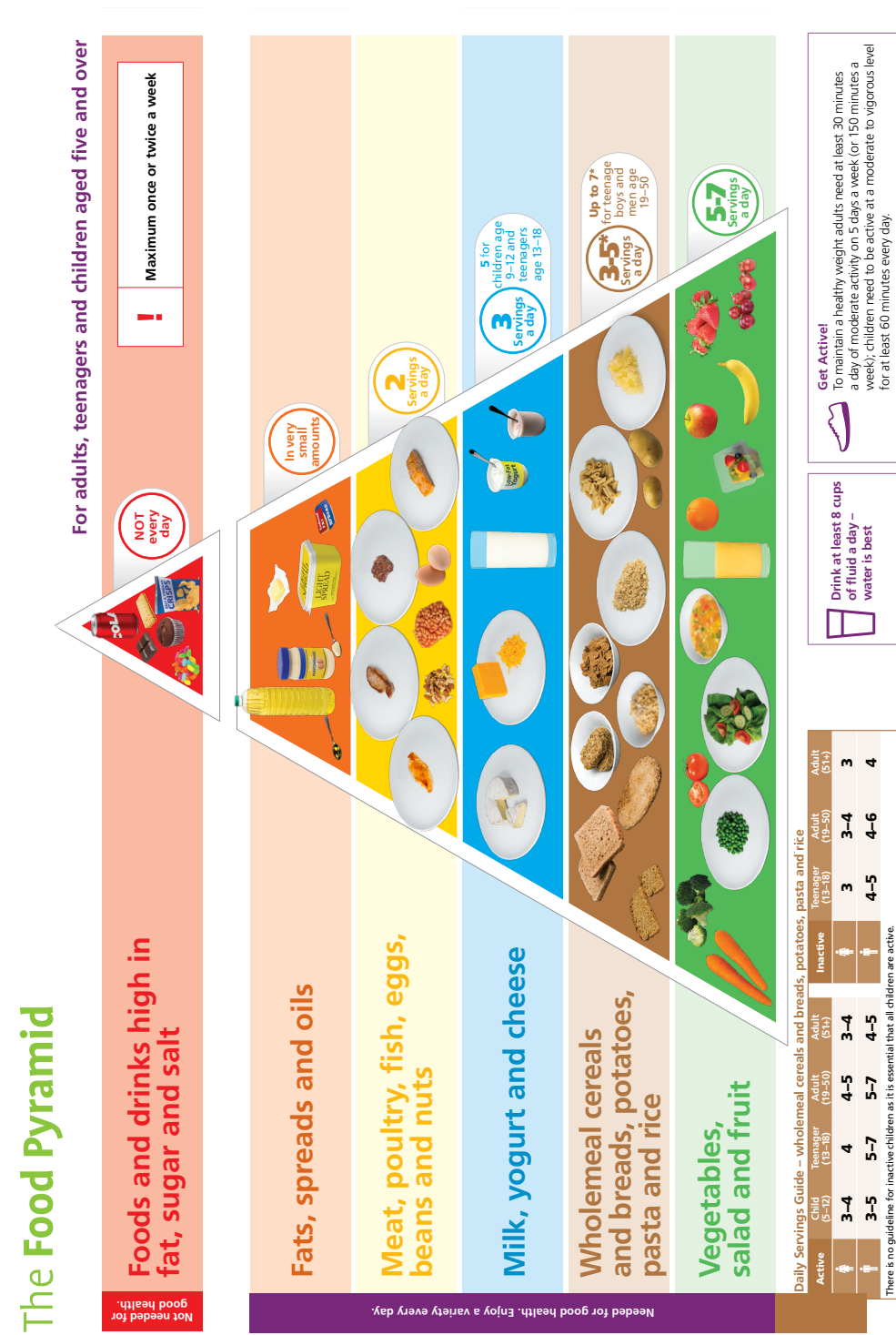
While guidance in this document does reflect the Healthy Eating Guidelines, it is important to acknowledge that due to the nature of the service of providing food parcels (for example: the need for longer shelf-life products; and the lack of cooling and cooking facilities and refrigerated transport) some of the items may not always align with the Healthy Eating Guidelines.

Support and advice are offered in this booklet on how to ensure food parcels contain items that fulfill dietary recommendations and provides:

- General principles to underpin your approach.
- The Irish Healthy Eating Guidelines and the Food Pyramid.
- Suggested Items to include in food parcels.
- Practical tips for food groups.

These guidelines are based on existing guidance developed by Public Health England (PHE), Food Standards Scotland and Public Health Agency NI Dietetic Service and adapted to reflect the Irish Healthy Eating Guidelines and the Food Pyramid. These were developed by Healthy Ireland in partnership with **safe food**, HSE and FSAI.

General Guidelines



- The contents of food parcels should be balanced to reflect, as much as possible, the national Healthy Eating Guidelines and the Food Pyramid (see Figure A). These Guidelines show the types of foods and serving sizes that a healthy adult, teenager or child over 5-years needs a day for a healthy diet. Food portions should be adjusted depending on whether the parcel is for 1 meal or for the whole day.
- A parcel for a whole day should contain:
 - **A variety of vegetables, salad, and fruit** to provide 5-7 portions of fruit and vegetables (400-560g) a day or 2 servings per meal for each person.
 - **A variety of wholemeal cereals, breads, potatoes, pasta and rice** to be enjoyed at each meal. Recipients should receive 3-5 servings a day and more for active teenage boys and men aged 19-50 years. Aim for at least 1 serving for each meal.
 - **Milk, yogurt and cheese** Aim for 1 serving for each meal.
 - **Some meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts**, choosing lean, skinless meat and poultry where possible. Recipients need 2 daily servings, with a portion of fish twice a week (one of which is oily). Red meat should be limited to no more than 70 g per day. Processed meat should be limited to twice a week. Beans, peas, chickpeas, nuts and seeds are rich in vitamins and minerals, low in fat and good protein options for vegetarians.
 - **Fats, spreads and oils** are needed only in very small amounts.
 - **Top-shelf foods** are foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt, including cakes, biscuits and sugar-sweetened drinks. They are not required for a healthy diet and if included in food parcels, should only be occasionally and in very small amounts.
- These Guidelines are not intended for those who have special dietary requirements, medical needs or require individual nutrition advice.** They should seek advice from their GP or a Dietitian. The Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute has advice on their website (www.indi.ie) for people with specific health conditions.

Foods to be included and practical tips

Vegetables, salad and fruit



Include

- All types of fresh, frozen, tinned, juiced and dried fruits.
- All types of fresh, frozen, tinned and juiced vegetables.

Practical Tips

- Variety – think of having a range of colours.
- Choose tinned vegetables in unsalted water.
- Tinned fruit in fruit juice is healthier than syrup.
- Limit unsweetened fruit juice to 150 ml per day.
- Consider where the parcel is going to. Carrots, onions, cabbage and broccoli can be stored at room temperature.
- Avoid food waste by dividing up bags of fresh fruit and vegetables or halve larger vegetables for smaller households and people living alone.

Wholemeal cereals and breads, potatoes, pasta and rice



Include

- All types of Breads (sliced pan, soda bread, wheaten bread, pitta bread, bagels and tortillas).
- Any kind of potato, yam or plantain
- Wholegrain breakfast cereals – choose products fortified with vitamins and minerals while having low-sugar and salt. Porridge and wheat biscuits are best.
- Rice, couscous, semolina, tapioca, maize, cornmeal and quinoa
- Noodles and pasta
- Other grains (oats, barley, buckwheat, rye, spelt and cracked wheat).

Practical Tips

- Choose wholegrain or high fibre options e.g. wholegrain bread, brown rice, high fibre cereals, whole wheat pasta. However white bread, rice and pasta and flaked cereals are also acceptable.
- Breakfast cereals that have been fortified with vitamins and minerals will provide the best nutrition. Avoid those high in salt and sugar.
- Porridge is a great, versatile breakfast option.

Foods to be included and practical tips

Milk, yogurt and cheese



Include

- All types of milk, including low-fat milk, skimmed milk or dried milk powder.
- Cheese (cheddar, cottage cheese, cheese spreads, Edam, goat’s cheese).
- Yogurt (fruit or plain, whole milk or low-fat), or fromage frais.
- Calcium-fortified plant-based milk alternatives.

Practical Tips

- Choose reduced fat or low-fat alternatives e.g. low-fat milk where possible.
- If using milk alternatives, like soya, rice or almond, choose those fortified with calcium.
- Look for low-sugar yogurt and fromage frais.
- Ultra-heat treated (UHT) milks and dried milk powders can be stored at room temperature and are easier to transport. Choose lower-fat versions (such as semi skimmed and 1% fat milk)

Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts



Include

- All cuts of lean beef, lamb and pork, as well as processed meats such as ham, bacon, salami, corned beef, beef burgers and sausages.
- Fish (fresh or frozen) and tinned fish (such as tuna, sardines, pilchards, and mackerel) and fish products such as fish cakes and fish fingers).
- Oily fish includes salmon, sardines, trout and mackerel.
- Eggs.
- Protein products suitable for vegetarians, such as nuts, tofu and quinoa and textured protein products such as soya and mycoprotein (e.g., Quorn).

Practical Tips

- Provide a variety to allow choice for those who may not eat meat or fish.
- Tinned meats, fish and poultry have a long shelf-life and are good alternatives to fresh meat.
- Choose tinned meats stored in spring water, sunflower oil or sauce such as tomato or curry rather than brine.
- Limit processed salty meats such as sausages, bacon and ham to once or twice a week.
- Provide lean cuts of meat where possible.
- Tinned pulses (e.g. kidney beans, chickpeas, butter beans) are a good choice of protein for vegetarians and are relatively inexpensive.

Foods to be included and practical tips

Fats, spreads and oils



Include

- Rapeseed, olive, canola, sunflower or corn oils.
- Limit mayonnaise, coleslaw and salad dressings and use low-fat alternatives where possible.

Practical Tips

- Choose mono or polyunsaturated reduced fat or light spreads where possible.

Foods high in fat, salt and sugar



Include

- Top-shelf foods such as crisps, biscuits, pastries, cakes, chocolate, sweets, jams, honey, table sugar and full-sugar soft drinks.

Practical Tips

- These are not required for a healthy diet.
- If included in food parcels – only occasionally and in very small amounts.

Food safety advice for safe transport and storage

Advice for transportation

Vehicles must be:

- easy to clean and disinfect,
- in good condition,
- cleaned, disinfected and dried thoroughly between use,
- dedicated to the transport of food and not used for other purposes that may lead to contamination,
- capable of maintaining the temperature of the food stored within them for the length of time necessary for transport.

Avoid cross-contamination by:

- separating food and non-food items,
- separating raw and cooked foods

Avoid food poisoning by:

- keeping hot and cold foods separate to maintain temperatures.

Advice for temperature control

- Refrigerated food must be kept below 5°C.
- Hot foods must be kept above 63°C.
- Frozen foods must be kept below -18°C.

Advice for delivery drivers and personnel

- Sanitise hands before and after each delivery. Gloves are not recommended.
- Wear appropriate and clean protective clothing when necessary.
- Maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness.

For further food safety advice on food donation contact the Food Safety Authority of Ireland or go to https://www.fsai.ie/food_businesses/donations.html



An Roinn Coimírce Sóisialaí
Department of Social Protection



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



Food Safety
AUTHORITY OF IRELAND

