

# Nutritional considerations for different age groups

The amount of energy and nutrients we need vary depending on our age. Here are some general guidelines to consider when cooking for different age groups.

## Children

- Young children need energy dense diets to support their growth and development. Children have smaller stomachs than adults and need to eat smaller amounts and include energy dense foods more often.
- Whole milk and yogurt are recommended over semi skimmed or skimmed milk.
- Too many high fibre foods may mean they get full more quickly and will be unable to meet their energy demands by eating enough food. A mixture of wholegrain and refined carbohydrates should be offered.
- Young children need less salt than adults so avoid adding salt to food.

## Teenagers

- Teenagers are going through rapid growth and development and often have energy and nutrient needs that are greater than an adult.
- Consider offering larger portions of well-balanced meals.
- Protein and iron are needed for growth and repair. Include meat, fish, eggs, nuts and pulses.
- Teenagers' rapid growth also means they need more calcium to help build healthy bones. Including a source of dairy will help teenagers meet their daily calcium recommendations. Milk, fortified plant milk, yogurt and cheese are all good sources.

## Adults

- Following the "build a balanced meal" guide will help adults eat a well-balanced diet.
- Use herbs & spices in cooking instead of salt.
- Offer less fried food and processed meats.
- Offer more plant-based sources of protein.

## Pregnant/lactating women

- Following the "build a balanced meal" guide will help adults eat a well-balanced diet.
- Energy needs increase throughout pregnancy, but pregnant women don't need to "eat for two". In the second trimester energy needs increase by 260kcal (the size of a large snack) and 500kcal in the third trimester (the size of a medium sized meal).

## Older adults

- Food and drink that make up a healthy older adult's diet may need to be slightly different from a younger adult.
- Older adults can be at risk of undernutrition, especially those over 65 who are living alone. Undernutrition means not having or eating enough to be healthy, and 1 in 10 older adults in the UK living alone are at risk of undernutrition.
- Nutrition recommendations for this group are a little different. Check out [www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk](http://www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk) for more information.

