

Nutrition and Immunity for Children

(10 years and younger)

We all want to protect our kids, whether from falls or infections and disease, and to send them to school, clubs and social activities where possible.

Children are often in close physical contact in group settings, sharing toys, books and games, and may have not yet learned the importance of handwashing. It is important to support children's immune systems to fend off infections wherever possible.

The immune system is the body's defence against disease and infection, and a healthy, balanced diet with a variety of foods from the main food groups can help to keep it working properly. As well as nutrients such as protein and omega -3 fats, a number of vitamins and minerals have key roles in supporting our immune systems.

Vitamin A

Found in:

Eggs, cheese, whole milk. The body can also make **vitamin A** from beta-carotene, found in dark green leafy vegetables (e.g. spinach), orange-coloured fruits and vegetables (e.g. carrots, cantaloupe melon).

DID YOU KNOW?

Carrots are rich in beta-carotene which can be converted to **vitamin A** in the body – 3 tablespoons will provide children with all they need for the day!



Vitamin B6

Found in:

Poultry, fish, fortified breakfast cereals, chickpeas, soya beans, some fruit and vegetables (e.g. bananas, avocados, green peppers).



DID YOU KNOW?

A banana will provide around a third of the **vitamin B6** needed for a 4-10 year old.

Vitamin B12

Found in:

Meat, fish, milk, cheese, eggs, fortified yeast extract, fortified breakfast cereals, fortified milk alternatives (e.g. soya, oat, almond drinks – check labels).

DID YOU KNOW?

2 tablespoons of tuna in a sandwich can provide all the **vitamin B12** a child needs for the day (use wholegrain bread and add salad for a super sarnie).



Vitamin C

Found in:

Citrus fruits (e.g. easy peelers), berries, kiwi fruit, green vegetables (e.g. broccoli, cabbage), cauliflower, peppers, tomatoes.



DID YOU KNOW?

Broccoli is a good **vitamin C** provider – and is a popular vegetable with children. 5 small steamed florets will provide under 11s with the vitamin C they need for the day.

Vitamin D

Found in:

Oily fish, eggs, some fortified breakfast cereals, some fortified dairy and dairy alternative products (check labels). Children 1-4 years old should be given a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D all year, with older children advised to take a supplement in autumn and winter.

DID YOU KNOW?

Oily fish are a good source of **vitamin D** – why not try a sardine Bolognese – great for children (and adults)?



Copper

Found in:

Wholegrain breakfast cereals, wholewheat pasta, couscous, quinoa, shellfish, pulses (e.g. baked beans, kidney beans, chickpeas, lentils), dried fruit.

DID YOU KNOW?

Baked beans are an easily prepared source of **copper** that children often enjoy.



Folate

Found in:

Green vegetables (e.g. broccoli, cabbage, spinach), chickpeas, oranges, berries, cheese, wholemeal bread.



DID YOU KNOW?

Frozen green veg like spinach can be a good source of **folate** – it can also be cheaper than fresh spinach and save on waste.

Iron

Found in:

Red meat, pulses (e.g. kidney beans, lentils), nut butters and seed pastes (e.g. peanut butter, tahini), fortified breakfast cereals, wholemeal bread, dried fruit (e.g. apricots).

DID YOU KNOW?

Vitamin C can help the body absorb **iron** – so why not try a small glass of orange juice with some fortified breakfast cereal?



Selenium

Found in:

Nuts and seeds* (particularly Brazil nuts, cashews, sunflower seeds), eggs, poultry, fish, shellfish.

DID YOU KNOW?

Scrambled, boiled or fried – eggs are a source of **selenium**.



Zinc

Found in:

Meat, cheese, nuts and seeds* (like pumpkin seeds, pine nuts), wholegrain breakfast cereals, wholegrain and seeded breads.

DID YOU KNOW?

Lean beef mince is a good source of **zinc**; so favourites like chilli, meatballs, koftes and cottage pie will all boost zinc intake. For vegetarians, nuts and seeds and mycoprotein are good sources of zinc.



*For children under 5 years, nuts and seeds should be offered ground or as a nut butter/seed paste to reduce the risk of choking.