

Nursery dessert policy

October 2019

Context

At a population level too much sugar is being consumed, particularly amongst children. High levels of sugar intake increase the risk of tooth decay, with approximately one in six 5-year olds affected in Southwark¹. This is a significant cost to the NHS and families².

A high sugar intake is linked to excessive energy intake, which may increase the risk of overweight and obesity³. 1 in 4 children in Southwark are already overweight or obese by the time they start school in Reception Year⁴.

Data from the National Diet and Nutrition Survey shows that 'sugar, preserves and confectionery' contribute the most sugar to children's diets⁵. However, desserts containing a higher proportion of fruit, milk and cereals (such as rice or oats) can be included as part of a healthy, balanced diet for young children and can contain essential nutrients such as calcium and iron⁶.

Policy Introduction

Current school food standards for primary and secondary school lunches in England state that all fruit-based desserts should have a content of at least 50% fruit measured by weight of the raw ingredients (e.g. fruit crumble, fruit pie, fruit sponge, fruit cobbler, fruit jelly). Furthermore, no confectionery, chocolate or chocolate coated products are permitted throughout the whole school day⁷.

There are no mandatory food or nutrient standards for pre-schools and nurseries in England, however best practice voluntary guidelines for Early Years settings in England have been produced in the form of "Eat Better Start Better" which is held by Action for Children¹¹. Public Health England has also produced guidance advising a variety of desserts is provided each week but with a limited provision of cakes and biscuits⁸.

This policy is informed by best practice guidance and aims to reduce the amount of free sugar served at lunchtimes. The policy meets the government dietary recommendations for children and current school food standards (see Appendix 1 for further details).

Within this policy, free sugars are defined as "sugars added to food or drinks, and sugars found naturally in honey, syrups, and unsweetened fruit and vegetable juices, smoothies and purées"⁹.

¹ <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/assets/attach/7301/JSNA-2018-Oral-Health-CYP-20180718.pdf>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sugar-reduction-achieving-the-20>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sugar-reduction-achieving-the-20>

⁴ National Child Measurement Programme 2017-18

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/ndns-results-from-years-7-and-8-combined>

⁶ <https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Eat-Better-Start-Better1.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.schoolfoodplan.com/actions/school-food-standards/>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/example-menus-for-early-years-settings-in-england>

¹¹ <https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/resources-and-publications/information-guides/eat-better-start-better-pack/>

⁹ <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/how-does-sugar-in-our-diet-affect-our-health/>

The Southwark nursery dessert policy

This policy is applicable to all maintained nurseries and nursery classes within primary schools in Southwark, participating in the Council's Free Healthy Nursery Meals (FHNM) programme.

Nursery lunches (main course and second course) should complement each other to ensure balance and variety, and to provide 30% of a child's daily nutritional requirements.

Nursery lunches are required to meet all of the following criteria:

- Each lunch to include a main course and a second course. A second course can be either a 'starter' or a 'dessert'.
- Only one second course dish to be made available at lunch (with the exception of a food allergen alternative option).
- Second courses served over a week to include:
 - **Three times a week** - fruit (such as seasonal fruit salad) with a dairy-based accompaniment such as natural yoghurt with no added sugar.
 - **Once a week** – low salt savoury crackers or breadsticks served with fruit or vegetables and a dairy item such as cheese.
 - **Once a week** – fruit based pudding or cake, containing minimal free sugars and a content of at least 50% fruit or vegetables when measured by weight of the raw ingredients (e.g. fruit crumble, fruit pie, fruit sponge, fruit cobbler).
- Dairy options with fruit could include natural or Greek yoghurt with no added sugar, or low sugar varieties of fromage frais, custard, rice pudding or semolina.
- No confectionery, chocolate and chocolate-coated products to be served.

In addition to the policy requirements above, the second course of nursery lunches should also meet the following:

- Canned fruit should be canned in juice and not syrup.
- Whole milk yoghurt and cheese should be used.
- Use fresh or dried fruit to sweeten dishes instead of sugar/alongside reduced sugar.
- If providing ice cream, choose dairy ice cream as it contains more calcium than non-dairy ice cream, and limit to once a week with fruit-based desserts at meal times.
- Avoid artificial sweeteners when choosing or preparing desserts, puddings and cakes.
- Vary the desserts you offer with lunch each week.
- Ensure age appropriate portion sizes (see Appendix 2 for links to portion size guidance)

Policy implementation

This policy will come into effect for all applicable nurseries and nursery classes from the start of the spring term (January 2020).

Appendix 1 - Government guidelines and recommendations for free sugars

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) guidelines recommends that the average population intake of free sugars should not exceed 5% of total dietary energy for age groups from 2 years upwards. No specific recommendations are made for children aged under 2 years, due to the absence of information, but reducing or removing the amount of free sugars in the diet is encouraged¹⁰. This equates to a maximum free sugar intake of 15g for males and 13g for females, aged 2-3 years¹¹.

Appendix 2 – Recipe and portion size guidance

Example menus for early years settings in England, Part 2: Recipes (HM Government)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/example-menus-for-early-years-settings-in-england>

Eat better, start better – a practical guide (Action for Children) – Page 25
<https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Eat-Better-Start-Better1.pdf>

The table overleaf has been extracted from the “Eat Better, Start Better” practical guide and demonstrates dessert menu suggestions and typical portion sizes in practice. Portion sizes are typical example portion sizes for children aged one to four years, and are not suitable for children under one year old.

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sacn-carbohydrates-and-health-report>

¹¹

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/618167/government_dietary_recommendations.pdf

Type of dessert	Typical portion sizes (as served; cooked) ^{1†}	Typical portion sizes in practice, images not to scale
Hot fruit-based desserts	Apple and rhubarb crumble (60g) with custard (60g) Crunchy summer crumble (60g) and yoghurt (60g)	
Cakes or biscuits containing fruit	Blueberry muffin (35-40g) Banana and raisin flapjack (35-40g)	
Cold desserts	Seasonal fruit salad (40g) Winter fruit salad (40g) with vanilla sauce (60g)	

END.