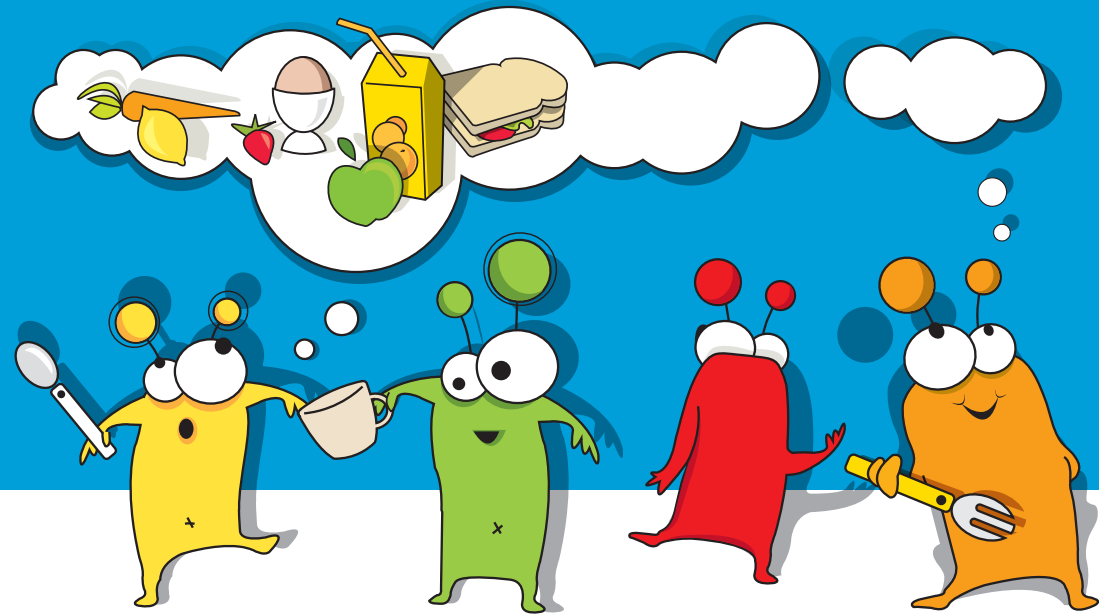
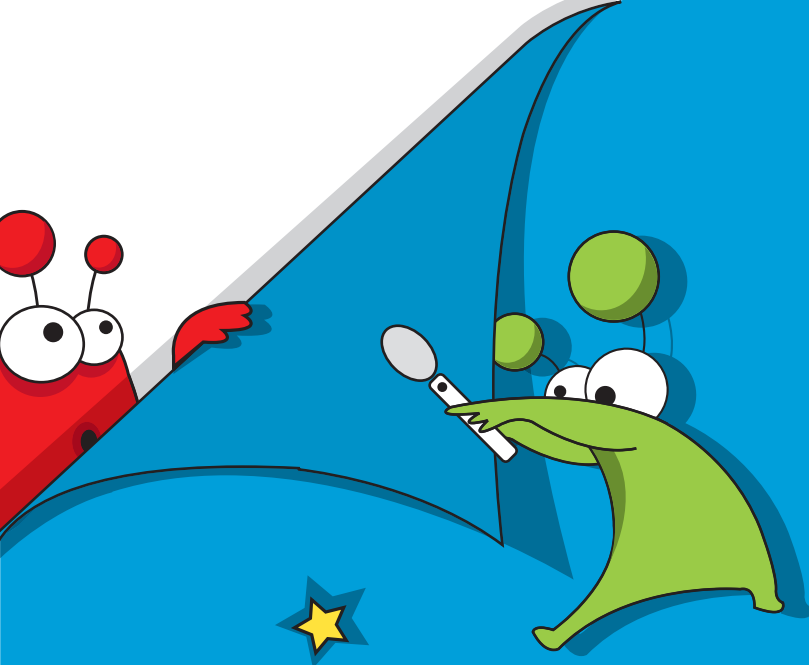


# Take the *safefood* Kid's Food Challenge



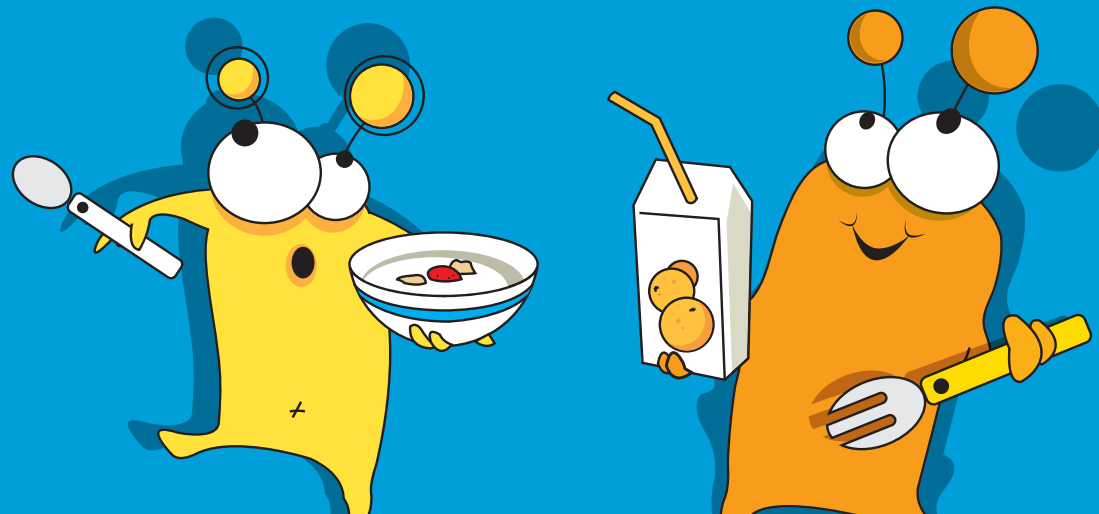
**HELPLINE**  
NI 0800 085 1683  
ROI 1850 40 4567  
[www.safefood.eu](http://www.safefood.eu)





# What's this all about?

As parents and guardians many of you are making huge efforts to ensure your kids are eating healthily and limiting the number of sweets and unhealthy snacks they eat. You'll know already that some of these treat foods are okay as part of a healthy balanced diet, but eating too many is not a good idea. At the moment, kids are eating on average about twice as many treat foods as they should be, so it's time to think about cutting down.

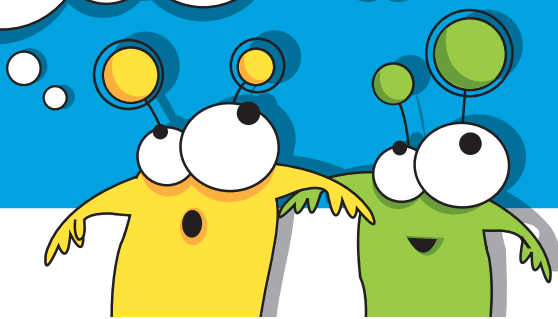


**This booklet is for you**, the parent or guardian, and it is designed to give you the information, ideas and practical tools you need to encourage your child to eat healthier food. It's not a comprehensive guide, just a starting point to help get you going. The chart is aimed at young children between the ages of two and eight, but it's even better if the whole family wants to join in. Older children may like to be involved if they think they are helping their younger brothers and sisters.

Making small changes to your children's diet could make big differences to their future health. But that doesn't mean your kids can't have 'nice' things to eat. There are lots of healthy, tasty options - more about them later.

**Handy Hint!**

To avoid confusion for your kids, make sure everyone who cares for them knows what you are trying to do - for example, tell their relatives and babysitters, or staff at a crèche.

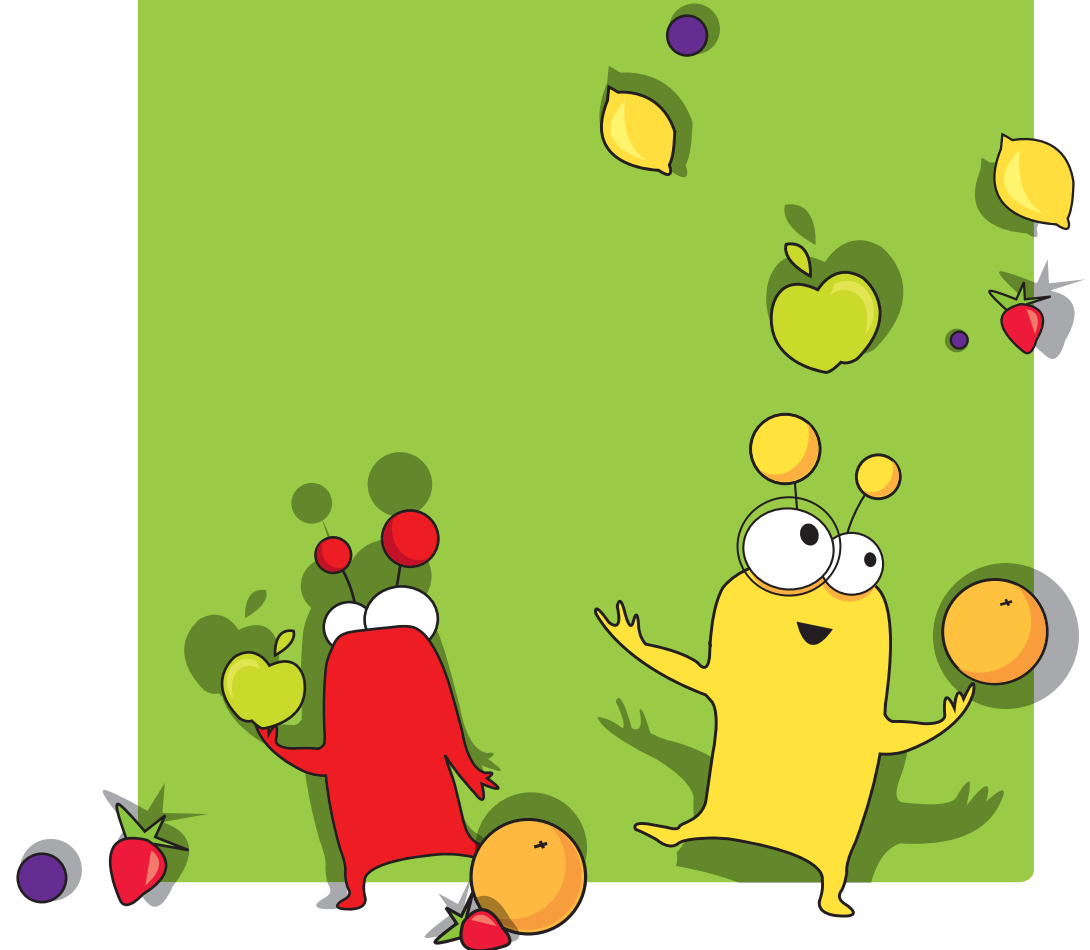


**What do we mean by treat foods?**

Unhealthy snack foods such as cakes, biscuits, crisps, chocolate, sweets and sugary drinks.

**Why cut down?**

These foods are often high in sugar, fat or saturated fat, and low in vitamins and minerals. That's why kids shouldn't eat them too often. If they fill up on these foods they'll have no room left for the nutritious foods they need to eat.



### Are my kids eating too many treat foods?

There's so much nutrition information out there that it can be a bit confusing knowing what's right for your kids. Here's a quick quiz to check if your kids are eating the right amount of treat foods.

#### How often each day does your child eat a treat food?

My child:

- A. Eats treat foods for breakfast, dinner and tea.
- B. Has a treat in their lunch box and on the way home from school or after dinner.
- C. Has a small treat most days and has some treat free days.

#### What portion size do you give your child?

I buy:

- A. Family size packs of ice-cream, treats and fizzy drinks. He eats what he wants.
- B. Standard size bars of chocolate and fizzy drinks. She gets what I get.
- C. Kiddie or 'treat-sized' drinks, bars of chocolate and bags of sweets.

#### When do you allow your child to eat treats?

I allow treats:

- A. Whenever he wants.
- B. For the morning snack at school or in the car on the way home.
- C. Only after a meal, when he has eaten most of the healthy stuff.

### If you scored mostly A's ...

It looks like your child is replacing some healthy foods with treats. These are low in nutrients so he or she may be missing out on essential nutrients. There is also a danger of eating too much sugar, fat and calories, which may affect your child's health over time. The **safe food** Kid's Food Challenge chart can help you to start making positive changes to your child's diet.

### If you scored mostly B's ...

There is a little room for improvement here. Try to give your child one treat or less each day. Smaller portions are better for smaller people. The **safe food** Kid's Food Challenge chart can help you to make small, positive changes to your child's diet.

### If you scored mostly C's ...

You have got the treats balance sussed. Treats are okay but not too often and not too much. The **safe food** Kid's Food Challenge chart will help to keep your family on track with healthy eating.



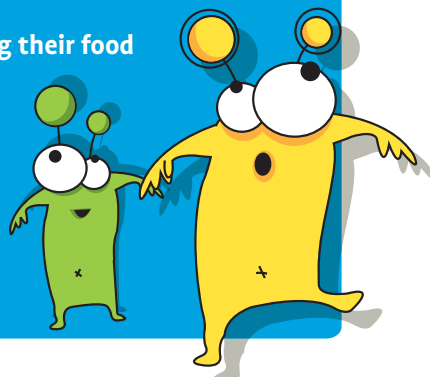
**Healthy eating** - At the end of each meal give everybody one sticker if they managed to eat healthily. It's important to reward them right away because this will help very young children to associate eating well with praise. Plus, the reward of a sticker will encourage them to continue.

### Guidelines for how you use the stickers:

Some children may not like eating vegetables, while others refuse to eat meat. As the parent or guardian, you will know which aspect of their diet they need to work on the most. Use the stickers to help tackle something specific your child will understand, such as 'eat a piece a fruit' or 'eat a bit of everything on your plate'.

### Here are some examples of when you might give your child a sticker:

- **If they tried to eat most things on their plate** – remember the child doesn't have to eat every last thing on the plate, let them decide when they are full.
- **If they ate a balanced meal including:**
  - Some meat, fish or vegetarian alternative, like beans
  - Vegetables or fruit
  - Some starchy food like potato or rice
  - A dairy food like milk, cheese or yoghurt
- **If they did not whinge or whine about eating their food**
- **If they tried something new**
- **If they drank milk or water rather than sugary drinks**



**Eat fewer treats** - At the end of the day, give your child another sticker if they ate one treat or less that day. You can also reward them for knowing about healthy snacks and choosing them.



### Handy Hint!

To help your younger kids remember which snacks are healthy, why not ask them to draw pictures of these and then stick them on the fridge beside the **safe food** sticker chart.



## What do I need to do?

The **safe food** Kid's Food challenge is designed to help you and your kids eat a balanced diet that includes a small amount of treat foods.

## How to use your sticker chart

The chart opposite shows one week's worth of meals and treats. There's a space for each family member's name. It's pretty simple.

- You get a sticker after each meal if you manage to eat healthily.
- You get another sticker at the end of the day if you've managed to eat one treat or less all day.

That means you can get up to four stickers in one day. We know that not all kids eat three meals a day so feel free to adapt this to your own family's habits.

The chart and stickers in this pack will keep you busy for two weeks. If you would like to carry on for another two weeks, please phone the **safe food** helpline for fresh supplies. The number is on the back of this booklet. Stocks are limited, so call soon!

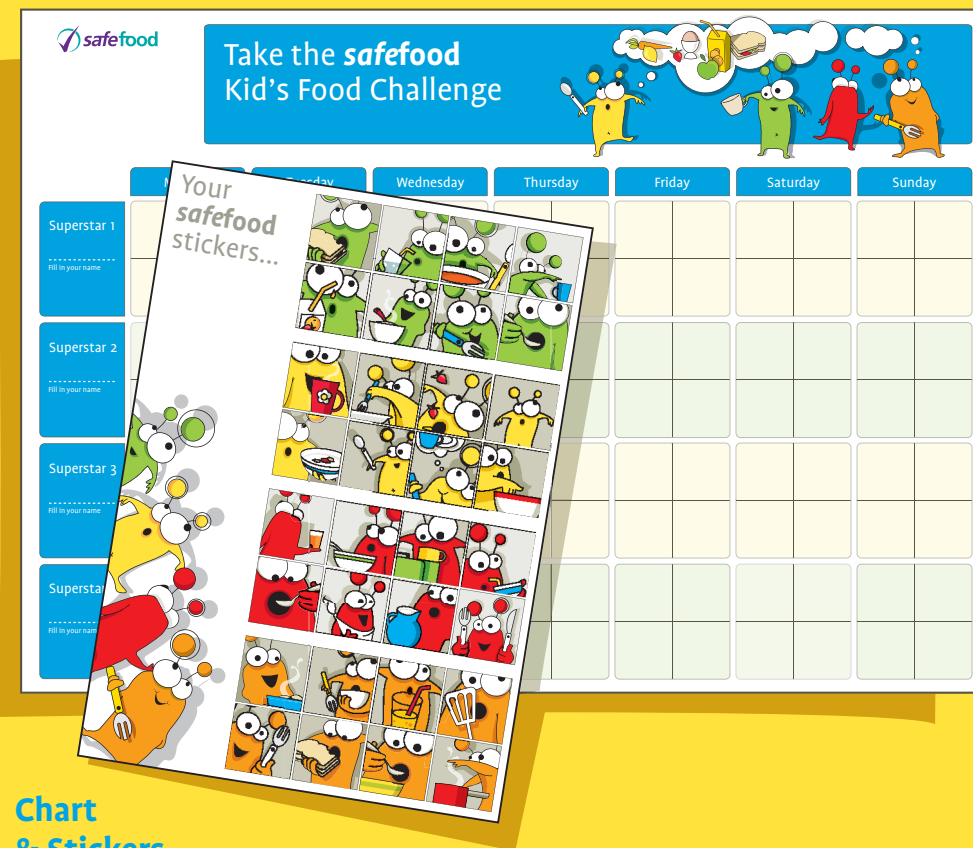


Chart  
& Stickers



**But my kids really love treat foods! Are there good reasons to cut down?** Yes. Here are our top ten reasons to cut down on treats and aim for a more balanced, healthy diet:

- Too many treat foods, especially sweet ones, will just give kids a quick burst of energy, before they crash and burn.
- A balanced diet will provide the long lasting energy to keep their brains going at school and their bodies going during play.
- Treat foods simply don't have enough nutrients (e.g. vitamins) and so your child should not eat treat foods instead of healthier foods like fruit and vegetables.
- If your kids fill up on treat foods, they won't have room for healthier foods and may miss out on essential nutrients, including vitamins and minerals.
- Kids who eat a balanced, healthy diet have a better chance of staying healthy as they grow older.
- An unbalanced diet may result in children becoming overweight, whether now or in the future.
- Being overweight can lead to health problems later in life, like diabetes, heart disease and cancer.
- A healthy balanced diet will give your kids all the vitamins, minerals and other essential nutrients from foods that they need to grow to their full potential and develop well.
- Too many sweets and sugary snacks can damage teeth, especially if they are eaten between meals.
- Healthy habits learned in childhood will last your children their whole lives long.

### How many treat foods can I give my kids?

No one wants to take the fun out of being a kid, so here are some practical ways to keep your children's treats just right:

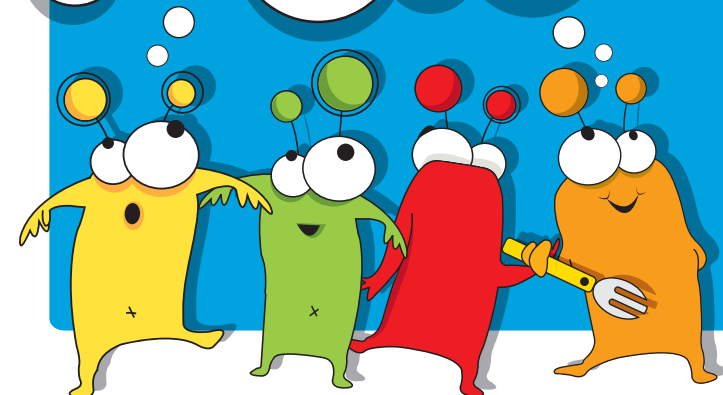
**Just one** - try to limit your child to one treat per day - this could be a small packet of crisps or a scoop of ice-cream after dinner.

**Keep it small** - look out for mini or snack-sized versions of their favourites so that you know they won't overdo it.

**Best with meals** - eating sugary treats between meals can affect your child's teeth, so it's best to eat treat foods with a meal. Also, if your children fill up on treat foods between meals, they'll have less room for more nutritious foods at mealtime.

#### Handy Hint!

When you're shopping only buy the number of treats you plan to use that week, so there won't be lots of extras lying around to tempt your kids or you! Involve your kids in deciding what to buy.





**Can you give me some ideas for healthier snacks?** We know that changing your children's eating habits will be a bit of a challenge, but there are loads of healthy options that we hope your children will enjoy.

### Switch from crisps to popcorn

Popcorn is low in fat and contains fibre for healthy digestion. If you pop your own, the kids can join in and you can add less salt.

### Gotta chew?

Offer mini boxes of raisins and other dried fruits, like dates, as an alternative to chewy sweets. You can also go for chewy cereal bars - these contain less fat than the crunchy ones and offer a healthier, sweet treat.

### Chocolate fix

For chocoholic kids, why not make a mug of milky hot chocolate after school for a fabulous calcium boost?

### Get fruity

Try to give your kids a wide variety of fruit to taste, and introduce varieties in season like peaches or strawberries in summer. If your child doesn't warm to the textures, why not let them help you blend it for a tangy smoothie?



### Smooth operator?

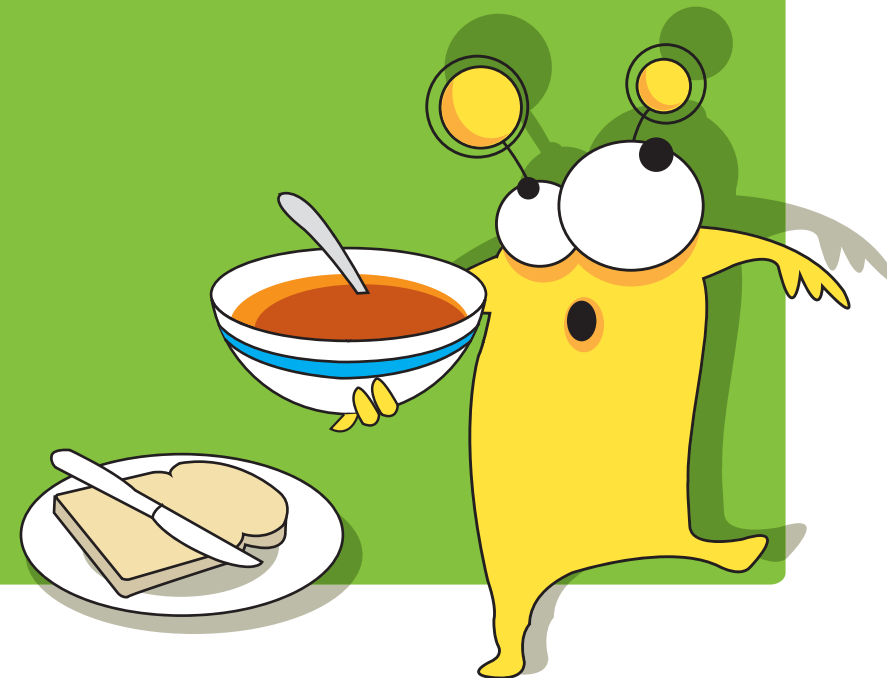
Fruity yoghurt (low fat is fine for children over two) can be a satisfying alternative for kids who love creamy, dairy desserts.

### All day breakfast

Unsweetened cereal with milk (low fat is fine for children over two) is a snack your child can easily prepare for him or herself. Encourage them to experiment with adding fruit, like banana or berries.

### Winter warmer

A hearty home-made vegetable soup (make it by chopping some extra vegetables while you are making dinner and boiling up with a veggie stock cube) can fill them up and really boost their vegetable intake.





## The last word - How can I get my kids to change?

We know that change isn't easy and that your children may react with tantrums or whining at first. Just remember that you are not alone and keep these tips in mind.

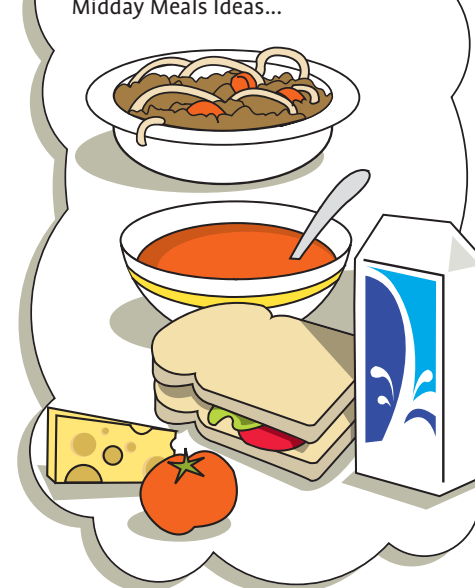
- **Focus on how they will feel healthier, be stronger and more active and social** - for example, say 'Eating that yoghurt instead of those sweets will help you grow big and strong like mummy/daddy.'
- **Focus on the positives** - when children are praised for trying to eat fewer treats, they are encouraged to keep on trying and this is what our **safe food** Kid's Food Challenge is all about.
- **Involve them** - you decide how often your kids get treat foods, but make sure they have some choice in what they eat as treats. In the long-term, this will help them to make their own healthy choices.
- **Offer other comforts** - always console your child with attention, listening and hugs instead of treat foods.
- **Keep treats out of reach** - you know how it is: it's much easier to avoid temptation if it's not right in front of you!
- **Let them help in the kitchen** - get your kids interested in food by teaching them how to cook simple things.
- **Exercise more** - it's just as important that your kids are active - try to reward your child's efforts to eat well with active toys such as bats, balls, Frisbees, skates and bikes.
- **Replace the treats** - try to reward your kids in other ways by giving them comics or books, or with outings to the park or the swimming pool.

*We hope this chart will make it easier for you to make positive changes to your family's lifestyle and result in happier, healthier kids!*

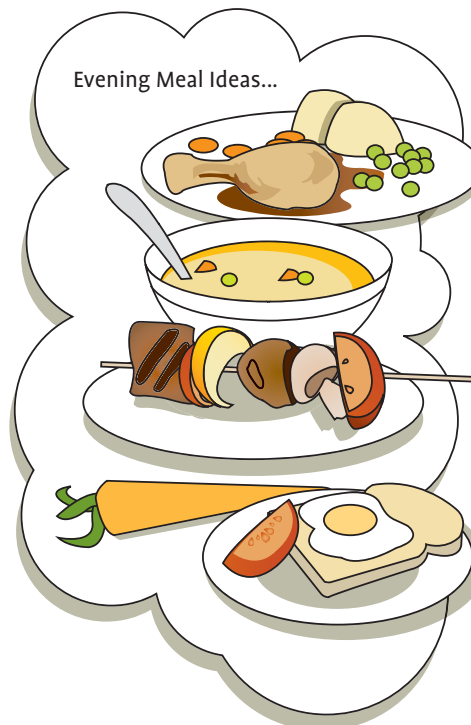
Breakfast Ideas...



Midday Meals Ideas...



Evening Meal Ideas...



Healthy Snack Ideas...



