Birthdays, Celebrations & Special Occasions

Eat Well. The Health Improvement Commission

Why and how to celebrate with children to ensure they live happy and healthy lives

It is important that children are given the opportunity to celebrate special occasions and cultural events, and food and drink is often used to mark these occasions. However many foods and drinks served at celebrations can be high in saturated fat, sugar and salt, and therefore have limited nutritional value for young children.



Why should children's birthdays be healthy?



Support healthy eating habits

Children learn to form healthy behaviours by consistent messaging.



Creating an inclusive environment

A policy can ensure that everyone is included and respected regarldless of their medical (allergies, intolerances etc) and/or cultural needs.



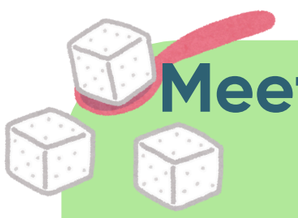
Opportunities for healthier options

Such events provide opportunities to expose children to healthier options and develop positive relationships with foods that can be trickier to eat.



They will celebrate at home

Since children are likely to have a birthday party with food and cake at home, there's no need to add more unhealthy treats at preschool.



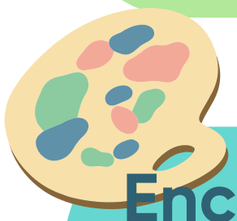
Meeting children's nutritional needs

Children's intake of sugar in a day is twice the recommended amount. For 4 to 6 years old this is 19 grams (5 cubes). Limiting the amount they eat makes sure they grow healthily.



Save money & stress

Offering free, creative, healthier options can save you money. Parent's views is that birthdays are expensive and they feel pressure to have to provide shop bought or home made cakes. You can help by removing this issue.



Encouraging positive behaviours

Offering options other than food, can actually promote other really important life skills such as creativity through art activities and learning through reading a book of their choice.



Make it a memorable occasion

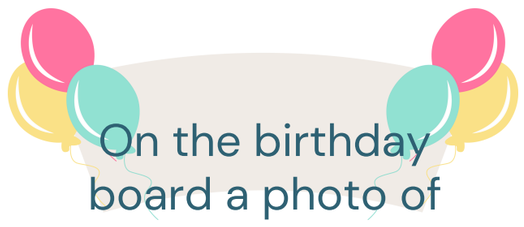
Children will remember the activity with their friends, rather than the food they ate. Coming up with fun ideas can truly have a positive impact on a child.

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Below are examples that settings shared with us and have found successful.

These sit alongside a policy that either asks parents to avoid bringing in foods that undermine health or if parents would like to bring something in, then it is healthy.

How settings celebrate children's birthdays by safeguarding and improving their health?



On the birthday board a photo of the child is displayed to make them feel special



They get a birthday gift of a book to improve their reading



Card with wishes from all their pre-school friends and staff



Child gets a special job such as helper for the day, where they get to help out staff



Sing happy birthday to the child or our "own" birthday song



Wooden birthday cake with candles



Blow out candles on a special "birthday dinosaur"



Large candles to blow out





Choice from special birthday activity – such as bubble popping or balloon bouncing games



Birthday hat/crown, badge or sticker



Ring a bell to announce their birthday



They get to choose a gift from the birthday box



Make the room special by hanging up balloons, a happy birthday banner and having a special chair to sit in!



Children and staff go on a birthday walk and a pictorial journal is given to them at the end of the day

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