

## Dietary management for your child: 2 -5 years



### Introduction

Parents often ask when the signs of an excessive appetite will begin to show.

This varies considerably between children - no-one knows why. Some may already be showing a lot of interest in food by the time they are one to two years old, others may not display this until after starting school.

The way in which it manifests also differs between individuals - some simply like talking about food or playing with toy kitchens, or eating everything on their plate; others will start to take food at every opportunity.

It is also not unusual for children with PWS to show food preferences - i.e. refusing to eat certain types of food.

Establishing a dietary management regime ahead of the excessive appetite appearing will help both you and your child to control weight gain and to concentrate on enjoying family life.



### PLEASE NOTE!

**This information does not replace guidance from any health professionals in individual cases.**

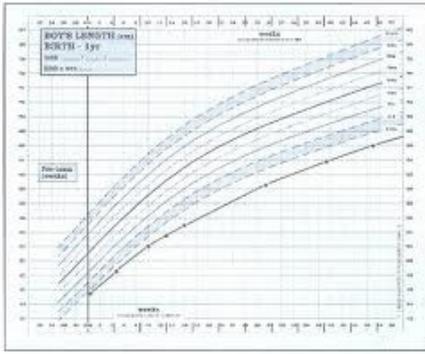
### Remember!

Deciding on a long term dietary strategy for your child is a vital to keep them happy and healthy. Preparation is key, and informing others of your plans is crucial to keep the dietary approach consistent.

### Counting calories?

Parents and carers often ask, "Should we count calories?"

**If your child is maintaining a healthy weight on their current diet, then there is probably no need, but if they are gaining weight, you should seek the advice of a paediatric dietitian who can give you more detailed information and support tailored to your child's needs.**



## Maintaining a healthy weight and growth monitoring

Because parents and carers of younger children do all the cooking, it is easier to control what they eat. Your paediatric clinic should be able to advise you on nutrition and arrange regular weighing to ensure your child is growing at the appropriate rate. You may also find the resources listed at the end of this leaflet helpful.

Monitoring growth patterns to check any child is gaining weight and height at an appropriate rate is done on growth charts. It is a good idea to ask your health professional to explain what to look for on these charts and how to understand them. Interpreting them in the context of PWS can be difficult as these charts are based on information from non-PWS children. Growth charts specific to PWS do exist in other countries – most recently the USA, but currently there are none that are based on UK data. PWS specific charts may be useful in conjunction with standard charts and PWSA UK can send you or your paediatrician copies of these charts if you would like to see them.

## Vitamin drops

The Department of Health recommends vitamin drops containing Vitamin D for all infants under the age of 5 years. These can be prescribed via your GP.



## Making sure your child gets a balanced diet

Over-restricting food and, in particular, fats, can occur and you should take care to prevent this. The best way to check that you have the right balance of foods is to meet with a children's dietitian.

If you do not already have a dietitian, you can ask your paediatrician to refer you to one – they are found in all children's hospitals.

## Meal Planning

How you plan meals depends very much on your personal situation, as well as the needs of other members of your family. Generally speaking, for those at this age, this should not be too much of a problem as most young children are happy to have whatever is set in front of them. You may find, however, that your child does start to focus on meal-times and what they will be having.

## How many meals a day?

As long as you do not exceed the overall amount of food your child needs in a day, it does not really matter whether this includes in-between meal snacks, or is limited to three meals a day. If you have other children to consider, it is probably best to keep to the regime your family are already familiar with.

Children with PWS often like a routine with regard to their meal-times and can be upset if this is not adhered to. On the other hand, it can be useful to train your child not to expect too regular meal-times - there are always the occasions when this just cannot happen for reasons beyond your control.

## Educating family members

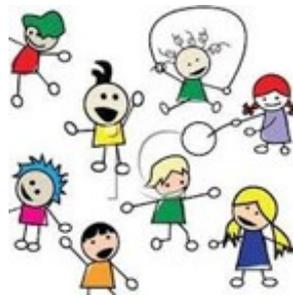
As you learn about PWS, share your knowledge with family members and friends. It's important that those around you and your child understand the principles and strategy you are trying to establish with regard to diet, and why it is important that everyone respects the regime you are putting in place.



Family members often mean well and can be easily offended. However, this can be avoided by involving and informing them of the situation, and perhaps showing them some of the information included in PWS Journey.

A particularly difficult concept for others to understand is that your child may show no obvious outward signs of having PWS. As such, the tendency can be that families and friends don't appreciate that care is still required to keep strict control over your child's diet.

People commonly show their love through food. Treating children and spoiling them is an important role for family and friends. Encourage them to show their love in other ways by giving non-food treats such as magazines, small toys, stickers, books and – best of all – time to play.



## Nursery or pre-school

Make sure that your child's nursery or school knows all about PWS, and the necessity of keeping food out of sight. With healthy eating on many agendas, it should not be too difficult to convince them about the need for a child with PWS to watch what they eat. It is

unlikely that your child will be the only one on a special diet - there may be others with allergies, diabetes, food intolerance etc. Some schools and nurseries provide a special area for such children to sit together so they can be more easily supervised.

Some schools and nurseries allow children to bring in cakes on their birthdays. If this happens at your school, make arrangements with the school beforehand about how you want to handle this. Many parents find it useful to be warned in advance, so that the child can either be given less dessert or supper (or a lower calorie meal) at home that day, or so that they can bring the cake home to eat later - perhaps in two or more servings.

Give the leaflet enclosed in this pack to nursery staff to inform them about your child's dietary needs.

## Dietary management for your child

### Snacks and treats

Here are just a few ideas for in-between meals snacks and treats for young children.

Don't forget to adjust the rest of the day's food intake accordingly.

### Ice lollies

Make your own using diet squash or fruit juice diluted with water.

### Yoghurt lollies

Keep lolly sticks. Make a small slit in a low fat yoghurt lid. Put the lolly stick into the slit and freeze the yoghurt in the pot.

### Rice cakes with honey

For a special sweet treat, take a plain rice cake and lightly coat with a tsp of honey. An energy-giving sweet treat! Approx 40 kcals.



## Birthdays and parties

Birthdays and parties are important to all children, and children with PWS are no different. If you are the host or hostess, then it is easier to provide healthy, lower calorie options.

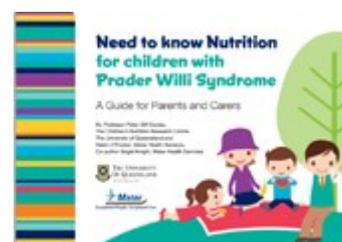
If your child is going to someone else's party, make sure the host or hostess knows in advance about your child's dietary requirements and ask the host or hostess to fill their goody bag with non-food items.

## Further information

Some of this article is taken from **Healthy Eating with Prader-Willi Syndrome** which is available to order. <https://www.pwsa.co.uk/about-pws/publications/>  
The book has sections on calorie counting, portion sizes, nutrition, meal planning and some sample menus and recipes.

## Need to know Nutrition for Children living with PWS, A Guide for Parents and Carers

This 44 page booklet has been compiled by University of Queensland and Mater Hospital and is included in your Journey pack. It can also be downloaded free from [https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/a71d4c\\_9055a2900becfefe090122a066742f68.pdf](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/a71d4c_9055a2900becfefe090122a066742f68.pdf)



## Red Yellow Green system for Weight Management

This system was developed in Canada especially for people with PWS. You can read a presentation on this at [www.bcpwsa.com/aboutpws/nutritional\\_care.pdf](http://www.bcpwsa.com/aboutpws/nutritional_care.pdf)  
The book can be ordered from the Ontario PWS Association at <http://www.opwsa.com>

## PWSA USA

PWSA USA also has various leaflets and books on dietary management. See [www.pwsausa.org](http://www.pwsausa.org) for more details.

## PWSA UK

Suite 4.4 , Litchurch Plaza  
Litchurch Lane  
Derby DE24 8AA

T: 01332 365676

E: [admin@pwsa.co.uk](mailto:admin@pwsa.co.uk)

W: [www.pwsa.co.uk](http://www.pwsa.co.uk)

Reg Charity No: 1155846

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## Thank you ...

.... Very much to Chris Smith, Senior Paediatric Dietitian, Royal Alexandra Hospital, Brighton, for contributing to, and checking this article.