

# Little Dukes: Mealtimes Policy

**Riverside Nursery Schools – St Margarets Montessori**

Policy adopted August 2024 - Version 1

Little Dukes Nursery Schools, 58 Buckingham Gate, London, SW1E 6AJ

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## Riverside Nursery Schools - St Margarets Montessori

### Monitoring and review...

This policy will be continuously monitored, refined and audited by the Headteacher who will also review it annually to assess how efficiently duties have been carried out over the year. This review will take place no later than one year from the date shown below, or sooner if needed due to changes in legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines.

**Current version adopted: August 2024**

### Reviewed by:

Rik McShane, Director of Little Dukes Nurseries  
Joanne Allen, Principal of Riverside Nursery Schools  
Ben Murray, Marketing and Admissions Director - Little Dukes Nurseries

**Next review due: July 2025**

### Please note:

This policy applies to all nursery schools within the Dukes Education Group, including:

- Hove Village Day Nurseries
- Hopes and Dreams Montessori Nurseries
- Little Dukes Day Nurseries and Preschools
- Miss Daisy's Nursery Schools
- The Kindergartens Nursery Schools
- Reflections Nursery and Forest School
- Riverside Nursery Schools

Any reference to 'Little Dukes' or 'Dukes Education Group' applies to all the nurseries named above.

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## Riverside Nursery Schools – St Margarets Montessori

### Statement of intent:

At Little Dukes, we believe that mealtimes should be happy, social occasions for children and team members. We promote shared, positive interactions at these times. We are committed to offering children healthy, nutritious snacks that meet individual needs and requirements.

### Policy aims:

This policy is in place to inform parents/carers and team members about nutrition and mealtimes at nurseries. It is intended to help identify and cater for individual food requirements and to promote healthy eating in a relaxed atmosphere.

We understand that early food experiences have an important effect on adult eating patterns and may influence attitudes to eating, so Little Dukes are committed to providing food that supports the development of healthy eating practices now and in the future.

### Key points:

- We organise meal and snack times so that they are shared social occasions between team members and the children.
- We use meal and snack times to help children develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves.
- We provide children with utensils/cutlery that are appropriate for their ages and stage of development considering each child's cultural eating practice.
- We ensure children always have access to fresh drinking water.
- We regularly consult with parents/carers to ensure that our records of their children's dietary needs, including any allergies, are up to date.
- We implement systems to ensure that children receive only food and drink that is consistent with their dietary needs and their parents'/carers' wishes.
- We plan menus in advance, involving local authority guidelines and a nutritionist where possible.
- Team members will keep the mealtimes routine as close to the home environment as possible which includes washing hands and eating with the

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children for positive role modelling, as we do not advocate the use of plastic gloves and aprons.

- We provide nutritious food at all meals and snacks, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings.

### **Approach to Nutrition:**

We champion a balanced and healthy diet for all the children.

For those children attending a full day at the nursery we will provide two snacks along with three main meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner.

For children in our term time only nurseries, where we do not offer a cooked meal, parents/carers are encouraged to provide their children with healthy lunch boxes.

Menus are planned in line with recommended nutritional guidelines, rotated regularly and reflect cultural diversity and variation. They are also displayed for children and parents/carers to see (Autumn/Winter, Spring and Summer menus).

We provide nutritious food at all snack times, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar, salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings.

Team members will always support children in making healthy choices and help them to understand the need for healthy eating. They will encourage the children to eat all portions of their meals with a strong emphasis on fruits and vegetables.

We aim to offer and celebrate food from all our children's cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing and encouraging them to try new ones.

We encourage independence and mealtime routines.

We provide children with utensils/cutlery which are appropriate for their ages and stage of development and considering the eating practices in their cultures.

Fresh drinking water and milk is always available and accessible. It is frequently offered to children and intake is monitored. In hot weather, team members will encourage children to drink more water to keep themselves hydrated.

We encourage children to prepare their own snacks and take active part in cutting the fruits and vegetables with the supervision of team members who will role model the cutting and will encourage independence. In this way we promote our ethos of children taking the lead in their own learning.

Staff will wash their hands before serving the meal and will support all children in washing their hands before each meal.

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We do not use plastic gloves and aprons because we want to keep the serving routine like a home environment. This also reflects our approach to environmental awareness.

Staff set a good example and eat with the children modelling good table manners.

Meal and snack times are organised so that they are social occasions that children and team members take part in together in small groups.

During meals and snack times children are encouraged to use their manners and to say 'please' and 'thank you' and conversation is encouraged.

Staff use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves.

The children may be given the responsibility of laying out the table in turns and adults can support the routine by placing the plates, cups and cutlery on the tables to assist with smooth transition of the mealtimes.

Any child who shows signs of distress at being faced with a meal they do not like will have that food removed without any fuss. If a child does not finish their first course, they will still be given a helping of dessert.

We will always respect cultural differences in eating habits. If a child did not eat at a set mealtime and is seen to be hungry, then we will offer a healthy, suitable snack before the next full meal is offered.

Children are given time to eat at their own pace and will not be rushed.

Quantities offered take account of the ages of the children being catered for in line with recommended portion sizes for young children. Consideration is paid towards how to cut fruits and vegetables to prevent choking (see appendix A).

Infants and young children will be seated safely in a highchair or an appropriately sized low chair while eating.

Infants and young children will never be left alone while they are eating, and team members should be familiar with Paediatric First Aid advice for children who are choking.

After each meal and snack, the children will be supported to wash their hands, and faces if needed.

Where nurseries support children with oral hygiene routines, dental hygiene will be encouraged.

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## **Managing dietary requirements and allergies:**

All our nurseries are nut free environments.

All staff are trained in the signs, symptoms and how to respond to a possible allergic reaction in the case of an unknown or first reaction in a child. These may include a rash or hives, nausea, stomach pain, diarrhoea, itchy skin, watery eyes, shortness of breath, chest pain, swelling of the mouth or tongue, swelling to the airways or the lungs, wheezing and anaphylaxis.

We ask parents/carers to share all information about allergic reactions and allergies on their child's registration form and to inform team members of any allergies discovered after registration. We share all information with all team members and keep an allergy register on Famly.

Individual dietary requirements are respected. We gather information from parents/carers about their children's dietary needs, including any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies that a child has and any special health requirements before a child starts or joins the nursery.

Where a child has a known allergy, the Headteacher will carry out a full Allergy Risk Assessment Procedure with the parent/carer prior to the child starting the nursery and/or following notification of a known allergy. This assessment will be shared with all staff.

All food prepared for a child with a specific allergy is prepared in an area where there is no chance of contamination and served on equipment that has not been in contact with this specific food type, e.g., nuts.

The Headteacher, nursery cook, and parents/carers work together to ensure a child with specific food allergies receives no food at nursery that may harm them. This may include designing an appropriate menu or substituting specific meals on the current nursery menu.

We incorporate additional procedures in line with the Food Information Regulations 2014 (FIR) including displaying our weekly menus in the nursery and sharing them on the Famly app, identifying any of the 14 allergens that are used as ingredients in any of our dishes.

Any dietary requirements will be identified when children are at the table by using a colour code system, usually with plates, allergy placements or table stands. These will be placed on the table before any food is served:

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**The system at Riverside St Margarets Montessori is as follows:**

**Colour coded bowls, cups and plates**

- **Green** – Child can eat all foods
- **Amber/Yellow** – Child has a religious or other dietary preference:
  - o Details stored on Famly app and appropriate menu provided
- **Red** – Child has an allergy:
  - o Details stored on Famly app and appropriate menu provided
  - o Daily requirements sheet displayed in every room with the name and photograph of child, days of attendance and the nature of the allergy

We consider seating arrangements to avoid cross contamination of food from child to child and where appropriate, an adult will sit with children during meals to ensure safety and to minimise risks.

If a child has an allergic reaction to food, a bee or wasp sting, a plant etc. a paediatric first aid trained team member will act quickly and administer the appropriate treatment, where necessary. Parents/carers must be informed, and the information recorded on Famly.

If an allergic reaction requires specialist treatment, e.g. an EpiPen, then at least two team members working directly with the child and the Headteacher will receive specific medical training to be able to administer the treatment to each individual child.

In the event of a serious allergic reaction and a child needing transporting to hospital, the Headteacher/team member will follow the emergency procedures laid out in our Accident and Incident Policy.

**Food Preparation:**

All team members who prepare and handle food are competent to do so and receive training in Food Hygiene - minimum Level 2 for all team members, updated every three years.

All our kitchen team receive level 3 in food Hygiene.

Our food preparation areas follow EHO guidelines around cleaning and maintenance and are inspected annually.

In the very unlikely event of any food poisoning affecting two or more children on the premises, whether or not from food offered at the nursery, we will inform Ofsted as soon as reasonably practical and in all cases within 14 days. We will also inform the relevant health agencies and follow any advice given.

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We observe the following food safety preparation advice for children aged 5 and under, to reduce the risk of choking:

Remove any stones and pips from fruit before serving.

Cut small round foods, like grapes, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, lengthways and into quarters.

Cut large fruits like melon, and hard fruit or vegetables like raw apple and carrot, into slices instead of small chunks.

Do not offer raisins as a snack to children under 12 months – although these can be chopped up as part of a meal.

Soften hard fruit and vegetables (such as carrot and apple) and remove the skins when first given to babies from around 6 months.

Sausages should be avoided due to their high salt content, but if offered to children these should be cut into thin strips rather than chunks and with skins removed.

Remove bones from meat or fish.

Do not give whole seeds to children under five years old.

Cut cheese into strips rather than chunks.

Do not give popcorn as a snack unless supervised in small groups as part of a Forest School activity.

Do not give children marshmallows or jelly cubes from a packet unsupervised as part of messy play activities as they can get stuck in the throat.

Do not give children hard sweets.

### **Legislative Framework:**

*EYFS 2023*

*Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021*

*Early Years Policies September 2023 - Version 1 73*

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## Little Dukes: Mealtimes Policy – Appendix:

The eatwell plate:



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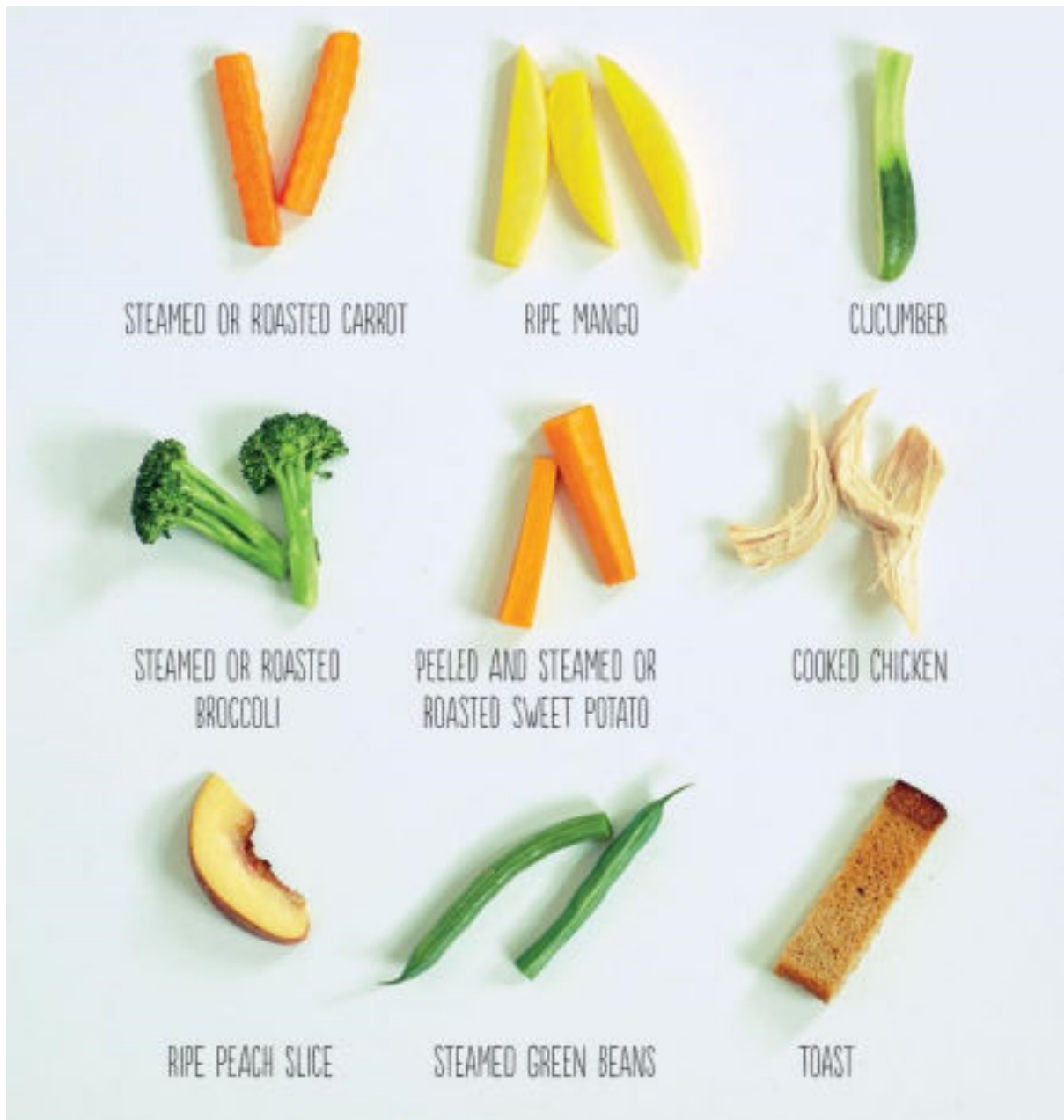
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Appropriate food preparation:



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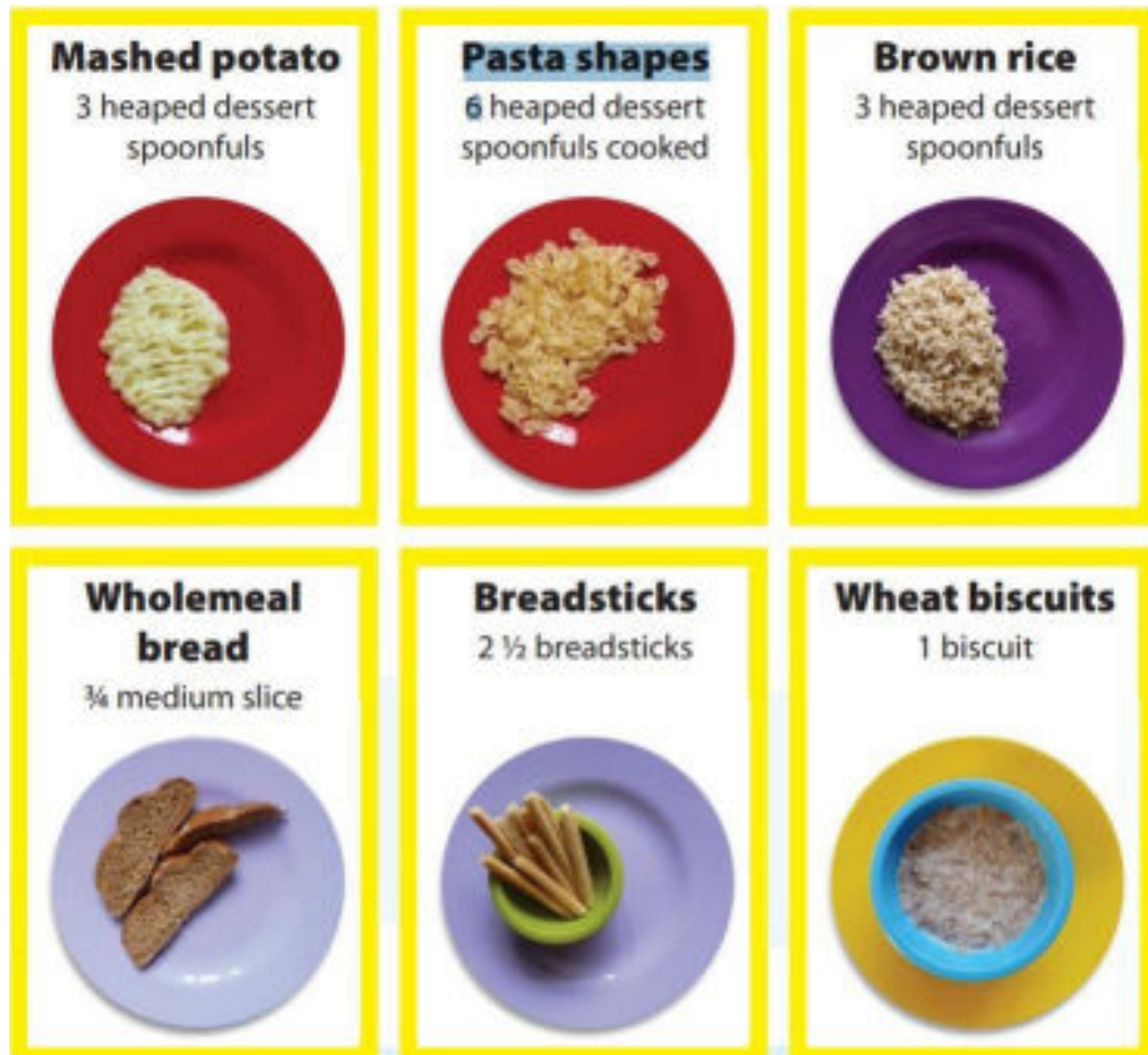
# HOW TO CUT FOODS FOR SAFE BABY-LED WEANING



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Portion sizes:



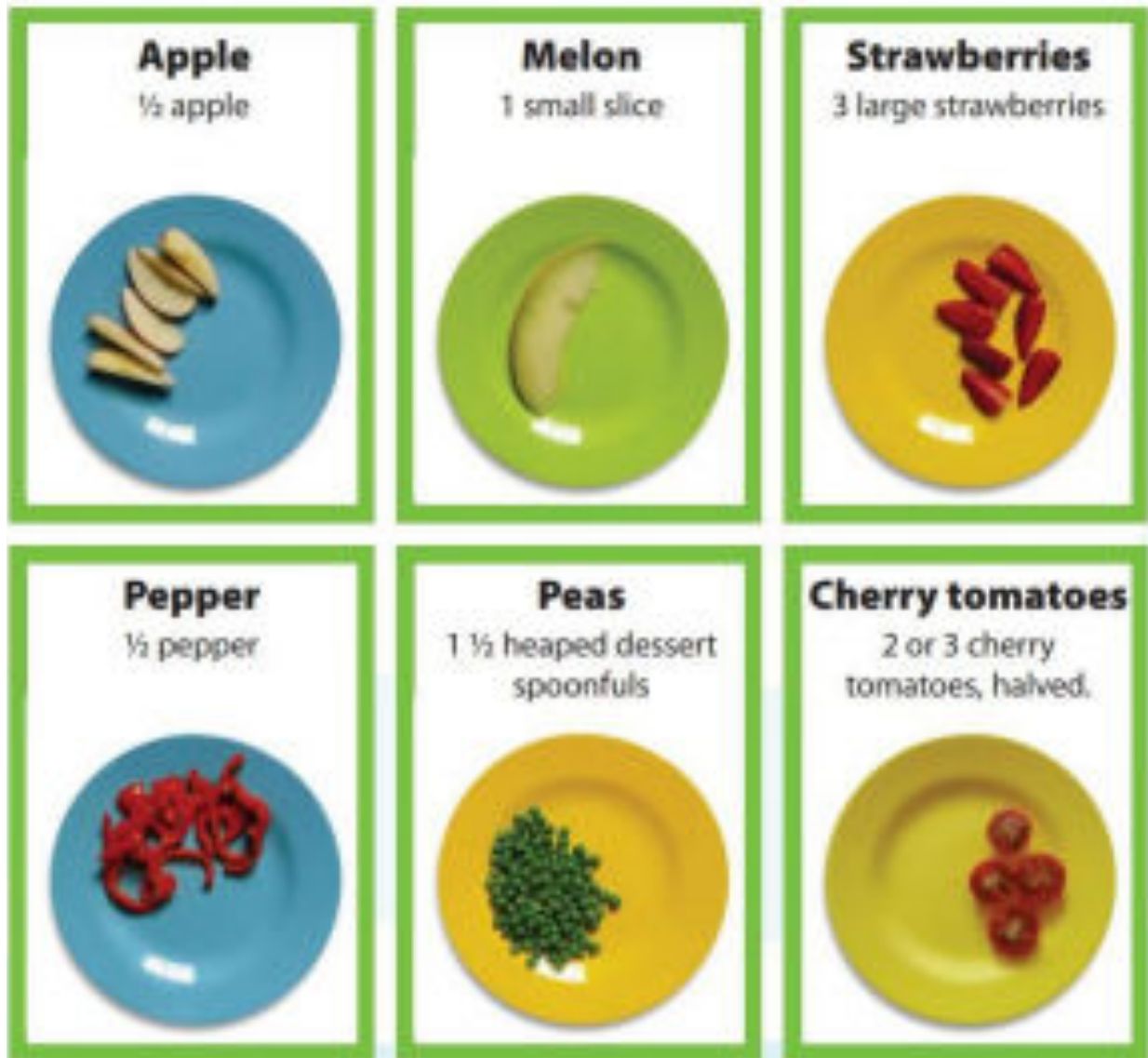
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