

## LIFTING THE LID ON CHILDREN'S BREAKFASTS

### **AVERAGE SCHOOL CHILD'S TYPICAL BREAKFAST CONTAINS ALMOST ALL THEIR DAILY SUGAR ALLOWANCE**

- A school child's typical weekday breakfast at home contains 97% of their daily free sugar\* allowance (1),
- Containing sugar levels that are TWICE AS HIGH as the average adult breakfast,
- And six times MORE than a child's typical lunch at school\*.
- Secondary school children eat almost TWICE the sugar at breakfast than primary school children (2).
- Chocolate and fruit-based spreads as well as fruit juices now some of the core sugar contributors (3).
- Most school aged children are also not eating one of their five a day before school every day (4),
- And over half of surveyed school children sometimes feel tired or lack energy at school.
- Top child nutritionist is encouraging parents to adopt school lunch learnings to benefit the whole family at home.



Almost all (5) parents think it is important for their child to have a healthy breakfast before school, yet the average school child's typical weekday breakfast at home contains the equivalent of 7 sugar cubes (6), according to new research, commissioned by Whole Earth peanut butter.

The independent study of over 4,000 parents and school children (7), found that the new battlegrounds at breakfast are secondary school children and the ongoing preference for chocolate spreads and fruit juices.

According to the research, an eight-year old's typical weekday breakfast at home contains 15g of free sugar but this amount almost doubles to 29g by the time children reach 12 and 15-years-old. This amount of free sugar is six times higher than a typical lunch provided by a school (4.5g) and is twice as high as an adult's typical breakfast (13g).

Preferences for chocolate spreads and fruit juice were found to be some of the main contributors to sugary breakfasts with chocolate spread alone accounting for a third of the free sugar content in a child's typical breakfast. The research revealed some confusion around healthy breakfast spreads with almost one in three parents saying they think fruit-based spreads are a healthy option. It also highlighted that over a third of surveyed parents don't check nutritional labels for added sugar when using breakfast spreads.

In response, top child nutritionist, Charlotte Stirling-Reed, is encouraging parents to apply learnings made from the school lunches' shakeup to breakfasts for the whole family at home.

### **CHARLOTTE STIRLING REED COMMENTS:**

*"In recent years, since Jamie Oliver campaigned for change, most schools have hugely improved the foods they offer to children each day. Some schools now offer more variety and balance including foods from all the main food groups, including fruit and veg and even lower sugar options.*

*"Taking a little time to reflect on breakfast choices can be really beneficial and if parents are open to providing more balanced and lower sugar breakfasts for their whole family, then taking a leaf out of school menus might be beneficial."*

The research also revealed how just one third of all surveyed children eat one of their five a day every day for breakfast before school. Parents attributed a lack of time but also a child's picky eating as some of the top reasons (8) for not being able to provide a healthy balanced breakfast.



**KIRSTIE HAWKINS, BRAND CONTROLLER FOR WHOLE EARTH, THE UK'S NUMBER ONE PEANUT BUTTER, SAYS:**

*"We all want to set our children up for school in the best way possible, so it is hard when you see statistics like these as they show that there is still some way to go to improve kids' breakfasts, particularly teenagers.*

*Swapping something like a chocolate spread for a no added sugar peanut butter and orange juice for water more than halves sugar intake at breakfast. Peanut butter is also a really versatile spread. It can be stirred into porridge, spread onto apples as well as on toast".*

Charlotte's top swaps and tips for parents to provide better more balanced and low sugar breakfasts can be found on Whole Earth's IG and FB page and breakfast recipes at:

[www.wholeearthfoods.com/recipes](http://www.wholeearthfoods.com/recipes)

## ENDS

For further information, image requests or interviews with nutritionist, Charlotte Stirling-Reed please contact:



**NATALIE CLARK MEDINA**

Account Director

01225 444268

[natalie@highlightpr.co.uk](mailto:natalie@highlightpr.co.uk)



**KARA BUFFREY**

Account Manager

+44 (0)1225 444268

[kara@highlightpr.co.uk](mailto:kara@highlightpr.co.uk)



## NOTES TO EDITORS

Censuswide conducted the research of 2,016 UK parents and 2,016 school children aged 5-17 in September 2020. (7)

- (1) Calculations were made based on the free sugar content found in the most regularly eaten foods in the typical breakfast of an average secondary school child, aged 12.
- A 12-year old's most regularly selected breakfast from the list provided was found to include a non-sugar coated cereal from the cereal options given, semi skimmed milk from the milk options given, a teaspoon of sugar added to cereal from the added sugar to cereal or hot drinks section, white toast from the bread options, butter from the spread options provided, chocolate spread from the spread options, banana from the fruit options, and a glass of orange juice from the drink options. For the calculations it has been assumed that they have all these items in a typical breakfast.
- The 29g of free sugar in the typical breakfast of an average school child aged 12 breaks down as: 13g juice, 9g chocolate spread, 4g sugar (1 teaspoon with cereal), 3g non sugar coated puffed rice cereal, 0g semi skimmed milk, 0g white toast, 0g butter, 0g banana
- A 12-year-old's most regularly selected lunch at school from the list provided includes: spaghetti Bolognese from the main course options, a shortbread biscuit from the desert options, banana from the fruit options, and a glass of water from the drink options. For the calculations it has been assumed that they have all these items in a typical lunch.
- (2) An average primary school child's typical breakfast – aged 8 – was found to include 15g of free sugar from the following foods: a non-sugar coated cereal from the cereal options given, semi skimmed milk from the milk options given, a teaspoon of sugar added to cereal from the added sugar to cereal or hot drinks section, white toast from the bread options, butter from the spread options provided, chocolate spread from the spread options, banana from the fruit options, and a glass of water from the drink options. For the calculations it has been assumed that they have all these items in a typical breakfast.
- An average secondary school child's typical breakfast – aged 15 – was also found to contain 29g of free sugar. It contained the same food choices as a 12-year old's typical breakfast.
- (3) Free sugar content in a portion of chocolate spread accounts for about a third of the free sugar in a child's typical breakfast
- (4) Two thirds of surveyed parents reported that their children are not eating one of their five a day for breakfast before school every day. A third (33%) of surveyed parents say their children eat one of their five a day for breakfast before school every day
- (5) 98% of surveyed parents said they think it is very or quite important for their child to they have a healthy balanced breakfast before school
- (6) Based on the assumption of 4g of sugar in an average sugar cube
- (8) Surveyed parents attributed picky eating (47%) and lack of time (41%) as key barriers for not providing a healthy balanced breakfast

## TECHNICAL METHODOLOGY\*:

All calculations in the study have been made based on free sugar levels. The free sugar levels for the average child's typical breakfast and lunch have been calculated based on estimates from reference data or brand leaders. Daily guidelines of free sugar are also based on NHS Live Well free sugar allowances for an adult and the average school child, aged 11.

## TECHNICAL CLASSIFICATION:

Free sugar is any sugar added to a food or drink. Or the sugar that is already in honey, syrup and fruit juice.

## ADDITIONAL IMAGES FOR USE:







## **ABOUT CHARLOTTE STIRLING-REED:**

Charlotte is a Registered Nutrition consultant who specialises in maternal, infant and child nutrition. After obtaining a first class degree and a Masters in nutrition, Charlotte now runs a successful nutrition consultancy company called SR Nutrition ([www.srnutrition.co.uk](http://www.srnutrition.co.uk)), which focuses mainly on work with children between the ages of 0-16 and their parents.

## **ABOUT WHOLE EARTH:**

Founded in 1967, Whole Earth creates natural and wholesome foods that are good for you and good for the planet. With a firm commitment on real, down-to-earth goodness, Whole Earth makes peanut butters and other products that are made with only natural, wholesome ingredients with nothing artificial added. Whole Earth is the UK's no.1 peanut butter brand and is best known for its growing spreads portfolio.

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#### ABOUT HIGHLIGHT PR

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