



PRESS RELEASE

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Early years settings must prioritise toddler nutrition to promote public health, say experts

The Infant & Toddler Forum - experts in child health, nutrition and development - is stepping up its work to encourage wider recognition and adoption of its **'Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers'** launched last year to address the lack of simple, consistent guidance on toddler eating habits.

Public health is high on Government's agenda; those with an influence on early years nutrition have a significant role to play in preventing long-term health problems, yet clear guidelines are lacking. The recent School Food Trust report highlights an urgent need for Government and all stakeholders, including health practitioners and parents, to work together to address this need. (1)

Britain is facing an entirely preventable epidemic of obesity and diet-related ill-health, with a generation set to die before their parents. Health agendas need to focus on supporting practitioners, parents and carers with effective tools to help change behaviour.

'Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers', an easy-to-use guide on what food to offer, what eating behaviours to encourage and how best to manage mealtimes, is the Infant & Toddler Forum's contribution to help meet this need. Endorsed by the Pre-school Learning Alliance, Child Growth Foundation, National Obesity Forum and the British Dental Health Foundation, the 'Ten Steps' are designed to encourage positive changes to toddler feeding with small easy actions.

Dr Atul Singhal, Chair of the Infant & Toddler Forum, said: *"Since their launch last year, the 'Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers' have been widely implemented in different settings by health and childcare professionals, parents and carers. As well as being a simple, extremely useful tool for those feeding toddlers at home, the 'Ten Steps' is a perfect resource to help implement the Government's public health strategies.*

"Continuing its work on early intervention through good toddler nutrition and eating behaviour, the Forum is developing activities to drive best practice where there's a need for practical support and

direction. Throughout 2011 we will continue to work with our partners to raise awareness and encourage implementation of the 'Ten Steps'. In turn, we hope health and childcare professionals will adopt the expert advice as best practice and share it with the parents, carers and toddlers with whom they interact."

The Forum plans to encourage wider adoption of the 'Ten Steps' and sharing of best practice with training and education programmes throughout the UK, to impart the principles and practical implementation of the Steps. Supporting those who work in the early years sector, including children's centres and nurseries, will be a priority to help ensure all children get the best start in life.

For practical ideas on how to stand children in good stead for healthy futures and how to engage with parents and carers, contact the Infant & Toddler Forum on 020 8971 0022 or via the 'contact us' sections of the websites.

For more information on the Infant & Toddler Forum and to download free resources, visit

www.infantandtoddlerforum.org (healthcare professionals) and

www.littlepeoplesplates.co.uk (parents and carers).

If you have press office enquiries, please contact Becky Darke on 020 8971 6408 or bdarke@saycomms.co.uk.

ENDS

1. 'Laying the Table: Recommendations for National Food and Nutrition Guidance for Early Years Settings in England', 4th March 2011, School Food Trust.

Notes to editors

- The Infant & Toddler Forum is an independent group of experts in child health, nutrition and development. The Forum was formed to provide health and childcare professionals with educational resources that translate the evidence base into clear health messages for parents, and to facilitate interaction, learning and the sharing of best practice between healthcare professionals. For over six years the Forum and its partners have strived to raise awareness and promote positive change in the field of toddler nutrition and feeding behaviour.
- The Infant & Toddler Forum is supported by an educational grant from Danone UK. All resources produced by the Forum represent the independent views of the Forum with whom copyright rests.
- Little People's Plates (www.littlepeoplesplates.co.uk) - created by the Infant & Toddler Forum - is an education initiative aimed at parents and carers of children from one to three years that seeks to highlight the importance of the correct nutrition this age group needs.
- The Forum's training and education programme will include tailored workshops and lectures, and its annual Study Day, which will have a new focus on practical sessions, showing health and childcare professionals how to implement best practice. Those interested in attending should contact the Forum for more information on the agenda and dates.
- New factsheets for healthcare professionals will include detailed guidance on portion ranges for toddlers, and a new resource designed to put theory into practice by supporting all those preparing meals for toddlers in planning balanced menus. Like all of the Forum's resources, the new range will be available to download for free from www.infantandtoddlerforum.org