

SETTING CHILDREN ON THE PATH TO GOOD NUTRITION

DIETARY TIPS TO HELP PARENTS MANAGE CHILDHOOD NUTRITION

Children and adolescents need sufficient nutrients to grow and develop into healthy adults. With the wealth of information available, it may be confusing for parents to identify the key steps they can take to raise their children as nutritious eaters.



Parents and caregivers play a vital role in helping children develop healthy eating and active living habits. Clear, simple and straightforward dietary advice can be delivered effectively by GPs in the practice setting with referral to a dietitian for more in-depth advice. The supporting patient information leaflet *Setting children on the path to good nutrition* is recommended to reinforce the messages provided during a consultation.

HEALTHY, BALANCED EATING HABITS

Good nutrition begins with the right food choices. The National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia (NHMRC) recommends children and adolescents maintain a varied diet which includes foods from the five main food groups¹.

1. Vegetables

- High in fibre, vegetables come in a wide variety of colours that reflect the range of

vitamins and minerals they contain. The recommended number of serves daily increases with age with young children needing two and a half serves and adolescents needing five/five and a half serves¹.

2. Fruits

- Like vegetables, fruits are made up of vitamins, minerals and fibre. The recommended number of serves daily increases with age, from one for younger children and up to two serves a day for adolescents¹.

3. Grain (cereal) foods

- Grain foods, such as breads, pasta, rice and cereals are essential for healthy growth because they provide children with energy. They are also a significant contributor to B vitamin intake and iron, both needed for energy release, fibre for a healthy digestive system, and magnesium for strong bones and healthy muscles. Choose low glycaemic index (GI) carbohydrates, including options such as brown rice and wholemeal pasta¹.

4. Lean meats, poultry and alternatives

- Lean red meat, white meat and fish are great sources of protein. Eggs, legumes and nuts are also nutritionally sound choices for this food group¹.

5. Dairy foods

- Reduced-fat milks are not suitable for young children under two years because of their high energy needs, but reduced-fat varieties should be encouraged for older children and adolescents¹. Dairy foods (milk, cheese and yoghurt) provide the main source of calcium in the diet, needed for strong bones and teeth. Dairy foods also provide a significant amount of riboflavin, needed for energy release.



EGGS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN

Some key nutrients that are found to be low in children and adolescents' diets, aged 9-13 years and 14-16 years, include phosphorous, folate and vitamins D and E³.

Eggs can provide good amounts of each of these nutrients and help meet nutritional requirements during childhood.

Eggs are particularly suitable for kids due to their high quality protein, which assists growth and development.

Eggs also contribute greatly to children's nutritional intakes as they are a source of choline, omega-3 fatty acids, iodine, vitamin A, and iron.

AUSTRALIAN GUIDE TO HEALTHY EATING – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHILDREN

SERVE SIZES

Vegetables and legumes / beans					
Ages	2-3	4-8	9-11	12-13	14-18
Boys	2½	4½	5	5½	5½
Girls	2½	4½	5	5	5

A standard serve is about 75g (100–350kJ) or:

- ½ cup cooked green or orange vegetables (eg, broccoli, spinach, carrots or pumpkin)
- ½ cup cooked dried or canned beans, peas or lentils
- 1 cup green leafy or raw salad vegetables
- ½ cup sweet corn
- ½ medium potato or other starchy vegetables (sweet potato, taro or cassava)
- 1 medium tomato

Fruit					
Ages	2-3	4-8	9-11	12-13	14-18
Boys	1	1½	2	2	2

A standard serve is about 150g (350kJ) or:

- 1 medium apple, banana, orange or pear
- 2 small apricots, kiwi fruits or plums
- 1 cup diced or canned fruit (no added sugar)

Or only occasionally:

- ½ cup fruit juice (no added sugar)
- 30g dried fruit (for example, 4 dried apricot halves, 1½ tablespoons of sultanas)

Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties					
Ages	2-3	4-8	9-11	12-13	14-18
Boys	4	4	5	6	7

A standard serve is (500kJ) or:

- 1 slice (40g) bread
- ½ medium (40g) roll or flat bread
- ½ cup (75–120g) cooked rice, pasta, noodles, barley, quinoa, buckwheat, semolina, polenta or bulgur
- ½ cup (120g) cooked porridge
- ¾ cup (30g) wheat cereal flakes
- ¼ cup (30g) muesli
- 3 (35g) crispbreads
- 1 (60g) crumpet
- 1 small (35g) English muffin or scone

Lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, nuts and seeds, and legumes / beans					
Ages	2-3	4-8	9-11	12-13	14-18
Boys	1	1½	2½	2½	2½
Girls	1	1½	2½	2½	2½

A standard serve is (500–600kJ):

- 65g cooked lean red meats such as beef, lamb, veal, pork, goat or kangaroo (about 90–100g raw)
- 80g cooked lean poultry such as chicken or turkey (100g raw)
- 100g cooked fish fillet (about 115g raw) or one small can of fish
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup cooked or canned legumes/beans such as lentils, chick peas or split peas (preferably with no added salt)
- 170g tofu
- 30g nuts, seeds, peanut or almond butter or tahini or other nut or seed paste (no added salt)*

Milk, yoghurt, cheese, and / or alternatives (mostly reduced fat)					
Ages	2-3	4-8	9-11	12-13	14-18
Boys	1½	2	2½	3½	3½
Girls	1½	1½	3	3½	3½

A standard serve is (500–600kJ):

- 1 cup (250ml) fresh, UHT long life, reconstituted powdered milk or buttermilk
- ½ cup (120ml) evaporated milk
- 2 slices (40g) or 4 x 3 x 2cm cube (40g) of hard cheese, such as cheddar
- ½ cup (120g) ricotta cheese
- ¾ cup (200g) yoghurt
- 1 cup (250ml) soy, rice or other cereal drink with at least 100mg of added calcium per 100ml



CONVERSATION STARTERS WITH YOUR PATIENTS

"Let's take a look at your child's current diet"

"Healthy children start with good nutrition and plenty of activity"

"Setting a routine can help your children maintain healthy eating habits"



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Please visit the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Australian Dietary Guidelines, CSIRO, South Australian Government Health, the Department of Health and Ageing and Better Health Channel websites for additional information.

- 1 National Health and Medical Research Council. Australian Dietary Guidelines 2013. http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/n55a_australian_dietary_guidelines
- 2 Meyer BJ, Kolanu N. Australian children are not consuming enough long-chain omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids for optimal health. *Nutrition*. 2011 Nov-Dec;27(11-12):1136-40. Epub 2011 Jun 12.
- 3 2007 Australian National Children's Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey, CSIRO Preventative Health National Research Flagship and the University of South Australia
- 4 South Australian Government Health <http://www.health.sa.gov.au/pehs/srer-award/goodnutrition-srer-sahs-1005.pdf>
- 5 Department of Health and Ageing http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/health-pubhlth-strateg-phys-act-guidelines#rec_0_5=
- 6 Better Health Channel http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Overweight_children_healthy_lifestyle_tips

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