Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia

Good foods and plenty of activity are just what you need for growth and health. But what are good foods? The Australian Government recently asked some of our leading nutritionists to provide some clear, simple advice about food and nutrition for health. The result is the new Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia.

Food, nutrition and health are like a puzzle. There are different pieces. Each of them is important but none tells the whole story. When all the pieces come together, the puzzle of good nutrition and health is solved. So it is with the Dietary Guidelines. No guideline is more important than another – they are a complete set.

Your nutrition needs may differ from your brothers, sisters and parents. The best food for a young baby is breast milk. Older children and teenagers need a balance of different foods and plenty of activity to ensure healthy growth and weight gain. For Mum and Dad, weight gain may be the last thing they want! Many adults are overweight and need to eat and drink a little less and do some more exercise.

Children and parents have one thing in common. They all need the goodness that comes from eating a wide variety of nutritious foods. The Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia are your best guide to food, nutrition and health.

Encourage and support breastfeeding

Children and adolescents need sufficient nutritious foods to grow and develop normally

- Growth should be checked regularly for young children
- Physical activity is important for children and adolescents

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods

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Children and adolescents should be encouraged to:

- Eat plenty of vegetables, legumes and fruits
- Eat plenty of cereals (including breads, rice, pasta and noodles), preferably wholegrain
- Include lean meat, fish, poultry and/or alternatives
- Include milks, yoghurts, cheeses and/or alternatives. Reduced-fat milks are not suitable for young children under 2 years, because of their high energy needs, but reduced-fat varieties should be encouraged for older children and adolescents
- Choose water as a drink and care should be taken to:
  - Limit saturated fat and moderate total fat intake
  - Low-fat diets are not suitable for infants
- Choose foods low in salt
- Consume only moderate amounts of sugars and foods containing added sugars

Care for your child’s food: prepare and store it safely

To obtain copies of this booklet contact 1800 020 103 extension 8654 (toll free number) or email phd.publications@health.gov.au

Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing
National Health and Medical Research Council
Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods and drink plenty of water

How many serves of these foods should we eat on average each day? This depends a little on your body size and activity level but aim for the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cereals, breads etc</th>
<th>Vegetables and legumes (choose a variety)</th>
<th>Fruits</th>
<th>Milks, yoghurt, cheese &amp; alternatives</th>
<th>Meat, fish, poultry &amp; alternatives</th>
<th>Extras</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 slices of bread</td>
<td>1 medium bread roll</td>
<td>1 cup cooked rice, pasta, noodles</td>
<td>1 cup porridge</td>
<td>1 cup breakfast cereal flakes or ½ cup muesli</td>
<td>1 piece medium sized fruit (e.g. apple, orange, mango, mandarin, banana, pear, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 cup porridge</td>
<td>½ medium sweet potato</td>
<td>1 medium parsnip</td>
<td>½ cup cooked beans, lentils, peas, green beans, zucchini, mushrooms, tomatoes, capsicum, cucumber, sweetcorn, turnips, swede, sprouts, celery, eggplant etc</td>
<td>2 pieces of smaller fruit (currants, kaki, plum, figs)</td>
<td>3-4 sweet biscuits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 cup rashers</td>
<td>½ medium sweet potato</td>
<td>1 medium parsnip</td>
<td>1 cup cooked brown rice/2 medium pieces of rice</td>
<td>½ cup cooked meat, fish, poultry, or 2 small eggs</td>
<td>1 cup cooked rice/2 glasses condiment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 cup rashers</td>
<td>½ medium sweet potato</td>
<td>1 medium parsnip</td>
<td>1 cup cooked lentils, peas, split peas or barley</td>
<td>½ cup cooked diced beans, lentils, chick peas, split peas or canned beans</td>
<td>1 tablespoon (20g) butter, margarine, oil</td>
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What is a serve? Here are some examples:

- Cereals, breads etc: 2 slices of bread, 1 medium bread roll, 1 cup cooked rice, pasta, noodles
- Vegetables and legumes (choose a variety): 1 medium sweet potato, 1 medium parsnip
- Fruits: 1 piece medium sized fruit (e.g. apple, orange, mango, mandarin, banana, pear, etc)
- Milks, yoghurt, cheese & alternatives: ½ cup evaporated milk, 200g (1 small carton) of yoghurt, plain or fruit
- Meat, fish, poultry & alternatives: 35-100g cooked meat/chicken (eg ½ cup mince/2 small chops/2 slices roast meat)
- Extras: 1 medium piece of plain cake/1 bun

Encourage and support breastfeeding

Throughout the ages there has only been one food ideally suited to babies - breast milk. Even today, breast milk remains a baby's best and most natural food.

While older children and parents need to eat a variety of foods to get all the goodness they need, babies need just one. Breast milk is special - it can provide all the food and drink a baby needs. Mother’s milk also contains special substances which protect against infection and disease and help the baby to grow. A baby needs no other foods during the first six months of life.

Breastfeeding is often 'on demand'. In other words, if the baby is hungry the mother will feed. This may be at the shopping centre or at sport on Saturday mornings. Don’t be embarrassed if you see someone breastfeeding in public - it’s normal! If you feel relaxed about it, the mother will too and the baby will get the food it deserves.

Children and adolescents need sufficient nutritious foods to grow and develop normally

From the time you are born until you reach 18 years of age your body weight will increase by 20 times. Your muscles will grow bigger and your bones will grow longer and stronger. Everything your body needs to power this growth and change can be found in food. Eating a variety of healthy foods will ensure all your needs are met.

Being active is important too. Walking, dancing, running, swimming and sports build strength into bones and muscles. Being active is also the natural way of balancing your food intake. The more active you are, the more likely you are to have healthy growth. Too little activity, or too much time in front of the television or computer, can lead to ‘sideways growth’.

If you are worried about your weight, try to be active every day in as many ways as you can. Walking to school is a good start. Some regular sport or dance for extra health and fitness will also help.

Eating to lose weight can cause problems. You can do without sugary drinks and fatty snack foods. But you need to be careful not to cut out the very foods your body needs the most for growth. However, the goodness for growth needs to come from a wide variety of nutritious foods - cereals, vegetables, fruits, lean meats and dairy foods.

Care for your child’s food: prepare and store it safely

Compared to food in other countries, our food in Australia is very safe. Few people become sick because the food they eat is ‘off’. But it still happens. Most of us have had an upset stomach at some stage after eating food that hadn’t been looked after. The effects of eating food that has gone bad can be a lot more severe than this.

Food goes ‘off’ when it becomes infected with bacteria. You can keep your food safe by always washing your hands well before you prepare food. Also, make sure your kitchen equipment is clean. Bugs love dirt. Return foods to the refrigerator as soon as you have finished rather than leaving them around on the bench. Bugs can quickly grow at room temperature but hate the cold.

Children and teenagers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>boys</th>
<th>girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-7 years</td>
<td>2 1 ½</td>
<td>2 1 ½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-9 years</td>
<td>3 1 2</td>
<td>3 1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12 years</td>
<td>4 3 3</td>
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