

HEALTHY EATING FOR CHILDREN AGED 0-5 YEARS

Encourage healthy habits

You can help children to learn to enjoy a variety of nutritious foods and as they get older they will be more likely to make their own healthy choices.

Babies

BREASTFEEDING (BREAST IS BEST)

What is the best food for my baby?

- Breast milk is the ideal food for babies as it contains all the nutrients required to support growth and development needed from birth to around 6 months of age.
- Breastfeeding can save time, is kind to the environment and best of all it's FREE.
- Research shows breastfeeding protects babies against infection, obesity and some other chronic diseases such as diabetes, later in life.
- If for any reason you stop breastfeeding before your baby is of 12 months of age, use a commercial infant formula until the age of 12 months.

Breastfeeding is best however sometimes this is not possible. All mothers need support from family and friends in choosing what is best for them. If you require support with breastfeeding or any aspect of infant feeding, talk to your child health nurse or a lactation consultant to work out the best approach to feeding your baby.

Starting family foods

At around 6 months babies are ready for foods. First try an iron-fortified cereal and/or iron rich food such as pureed meat, tofu or legumes. Then add different types of pureed vegetables, fruit and other foods from the five food groups. You can begin to offer babies solid foods, while continuing to breastfeed until 12 months or longer. They can begin to use spoons and sip from a cup.

At 12 months baby should give up the bottle and drink from a cup. Babies that continue with bottles after 12 months are more likely to get: tooth decay; ear infections and iron deficiency.

For more information on introducing solids to babies see the Healthy Kids website: <http://www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au/parents-carers/nutrition/introducing-solids.aspx>



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Toddlers and Children

Young children have small tummies and will eat less but more often. **As a guide plan for your child to have three small main meals and two to three snacks throughout the day.**

As parents and carers of young children it is our responsibility to decide what type of food is provided. Offer children a variety of healthy foods every day.

Young children need a variety of healthy foods from the following food groups every day:

- Vegetables and legumes/beans
- Fruit
- Grain (cereal) foods mostly wholegrain and/or high fibre varieties such as crackers, breads, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, couscous, oats, quinoa, and barley.
- Lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans
- Milk, cheese, and yoghurt.

How much fruit and vegetables should my toddler eat?

- **Recommendation:** Toddlers aged 1-2 years should eat approximately a 1/2 serve of fruit and 2-3 serves of vegetable each day.

How much fruit and vegetables should children 2-3 years eat?

- **Recommendation:** Children aged 2-3 years should eat 1 serve of fruit and 2.5 serves of vegetables each day.

How much fruit and vegetables should children 4-8 years eat?

- **Recommendation:** Children 4-8 years should eat 1.5 serves of fruit and 4.5 serves of vegetables each day.

What is a serve?

1 serve of fruit is:	1 serve of vegetable is:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup of canned (in natural juice) or chopped fruit or • 1 medium piece of fruit such as apple, banana, pear or • 2 small pieces of fruit such as apricots, mandarins, plums, kiwi fruit or • 1 1/2 tablespoons of dried fruit, only occasionally as concentrated sugar and can promote tooth decay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup of salad vegetables or • 1/2 cup of cooked or raw vegetables (such as broccoli, carrot, peas, beans) or • 1 small potato or • 1/2 cup legumes (such as a lentils, chickpeas or kidney beans)

For more information on how much dairy, grain and lean meat serves children should eat every day go to the Healthy Kids website: <http://www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au//parents-carers/guidelines/nutrition.aspx>

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Choose healthy snacks

It is important to offer your child healthy snacks. Offering small, planned snacks is much better than allowing them to graze all day. Encourage healthy eating habits by choosing snacks based on nutritious foods from the five food groups (mentioned above) every day.

Choose fruit and vegetables as a snack food

Eating fruit and vegetables every day will help your child grow strong and healthy.

Choose water as a drink

- Water is the best drink for anyone who is thirsty. Water is a good choice as it does not have any added sugar.
- In Australia, water is safe to drink straight from the tap or boiled if you prefer.

In most areas, tap water contains fluoride, which helps children to develop strong teeth.

- Fruit juices, soft drinks and cordials should not be given to young children as they contain a lot of added sugar.

Milk is another healthy drink option

- Milk helps your child to develop strong teeth and bones.
- Children can drink full cream milk from 12 months and reduced fat milk (not skim) from 2 years of age is recommended.
- Reduced fat milk has less fat than full cream milk but still has all the nutrients that young children need.
- Soy milk is a suitable alternative. Choose one that is high in calcium (at least 100mg of added calcium per 100ml).

Food to limit

'Sometimes foods' or 'discretionary choices' are foods that are not an essential or necessary part of our diet. These foods are high in kilojoules, saturated fat, added sugars or added salt. If chosen, they should be eaten only sometimes and in small amounts.

Examples of discretionary foods include:

- Sweet biscuits, cakes and desserts
- Processed meats and sausages
- Ice-cream, confectionary and chocolate
- Meat pies and other pastries
- Commercial burgers, hot chips and fried foods
- Crisps and other fatty and/or salty snacks
- Cream and butter
- Sugar sweetened cordials, soft drinks and sports drinks

Try to:

- Plan mealtimes to be positive, relaxed and social
- Encourage children to try different food types and textures in a positive eating environment
- Offer an appropriate amount of food, but allow children to decide themselves how much they will actually eat
- Offer meals and snacks at regular and predictable times
- Ensure that food is safely prepared for children to eat.