WHAT ARE THE DIETARY GUIDELINES?

The Australian Dietary Guidelines provide up-to-date advice about the amount and kinds of foods that we need to eat for health and wellbeing. They are based on scientific evidence and research.

The Australian Dietary Guidelines of most relevance to children are included below:

GUIDELINE 1:
To achieve and maintain a healthy weight, be physically active and choose amounts of nutritious food and drinks to meet your energy needs.

- Children and adolescents should eat sufficient nutritious foods to grow and develop normally. They should be physically active every day and their growth should be checked regularly.

GUIDELINE 2:
Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five food groups every day:

- Plenty of vegetables of different types and colours, and legumes/beans
- Fruit
- Grain (cereal foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties, such as breads, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, polenta, couscous, oats, quinoa and barley)
- Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or their alternatives, mostly reduced fat (reduced fat milks are not suitable for children under the age of 2 years)

And drink plenty of water.

GUIDELINE 3:
Limit intake of foods containing saturated fat, added salt, added sugars and alcohol.

a. Limit intake of foods high in saturated fat such as many biscuits, cakes, pastries, pies, processed meats, commercial burgers, pizza, fried foods, potato chips, crisps and other savoury snacks.
   - Replace high fat foods which contain predominately saturated fats such as butter, cream, cooking margarine, coconut and palm oil with foods which contain predominately polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats such as oils, spreads, nut butters/pastes and avocado.
   - Low fat diets are not suitable for children under the age of 2 years.

b. Limit intake of foods and drinks containing added salt.
   - Read labels to choose lower sodium options among similar foods.
   - Do not add salt to foods in cooking or at the table.

c. Limit intake of foods and drinks containing added sugars such as confectionery, sugar-sweetened soft drinks and cordials, fruit drinks, vitamin waters, energy and sports drinks.

GUIDELINE 4:
Encourage, support and promote breastfeeding.

GUIDELINE 5:
Care for your food; prepare and store it safely.

FOODS TO LIMIT: DISCRETIONARY CHOICES

‘Discretionary choices’ are called that because they are not an essential or necessary part of our dietary patterns. Discretionary foods are high in kilojoules, saturated fat, added sugars, added salt, or alcohol. If chosen, they should be eaten only sometimes and in small amounts.

Examples of discretionary choices include:

- Sweet biscuits, cakes and desserts
- Processed meats and sausages
- Ice-cream, confectionery 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.

It is also important to remember that young children (less than 3 years of age) can choke on hard foods. To prevent this from happening:

- Sit with them when they eat and don’t give them hard foods such as popcorn, nuts, hard confectionery or crisps.
- Cook or grate hard fruit and vegetables to soften them.
- Remove all bones from fish or meat.
Serves per day
2–3 years 4–8 years 9–11 years 12–14 years 14–15 years
Boys 2% 4% 5% 5% 5%
Girls 2% 4% 5% 5% 5%

**Vegetables and legumes/beans**

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

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

For discretionary choices, any vegetable can be substituted except sweet corn, or fruit can be substituted except mango, melon, papaya, passionfruit or grapes. A fruit substitute is needed for children under 2 years of age. A fruit substitute for children 2–3 years of age is 1 serve of fruit a day. For children 4–8 years of age, this can increase to 2 serves of fruit a day. The ‘serve size’ can be substituted with no-added-salt tomato sauce.

**Fruit**

A standard serve of fruit is about 150g (250kJ) or:

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

Or only occasionally:

- 125mL (½ cup) fruit juice (with no added sugar)
- 30g dried fruit (for example, 4 dried apricot halves, 1½ tablespoons of sultanas)

A fruit substitute for children under 2 years of age is 1 serve of fruit a day. For children 2–3 years of age, this can increase to 1½ serves of fruit a day. The ‘serve size’ can be substituted with no-added-salt tomato sauce.

**Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties**

A standard serve of grain foods is about 100g (100–350kJ) or:

- 1 cup (500–600kJ) bread
- ½ medium (40g) roll or flat bread
- ½ cup (75–120g) cooked rice, pasta, noodles, barley, buckwheat, semolina, polenta, bulgur or quinoa
- ½ cup (150g) cooked potatoes
- ½ cup (30g) wheat, cereal flakes
- ½ cup (50g) rice
- 1 small (15g) croutons
- 1 small (15g) English muffin or scone

A standard serve of cooked legumes and beans is about 30g (100–350kJ) or:

- 1 cup (150g) 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) *weekly limit of 450g

**Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans**

A standard serve of lean meats and poultry is about 100g (100–350kJ).

- 1 small (100g) cooked meat 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 weight) or one small can of fish (about 100g)
- 2 large (100g) eggs
- 1 cup (150g) 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) *weekly limit of 450g

**Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives, mostly reduced fat**

A standard serve of milk, yoghurt or cheese is about 100g (100–350kJ) or:

- 1 cup (250mL) fresh, UHT, long-life, reconstituted powdered milk or buttermilk
- 1 cup (225mL) evaporated milk
- 1 cup (4 x 3 x 20mL cubes) of hard cheese, such as cheddar
- 1 cup (130g) ricotta cheese
- 1 cup (200g) yoghurt
- 1 cup (250mL) soy, rice or other cereal drink with at least 100g of added calcium per 100mL

**WHICH FOODS SHOULD I EAT AND HOW MUCH?**

The Australian Dietary Guidelines provide up-to-date advice about the amount and kinds of foods and drinks that we need regularly, for health and well-being.

By providing your child with the recommended amounts from the Five Food Groups and limiting the foods that are high in saturated fat, added sugars and added salt, they will get enough of the nutrients essential for good health, growth and development. They may have a reduced risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity and some cancers. Your child may also feel better, look better, enjoy life more and live longer!

The amount of food your child will need from the Five Food Groups depends on their age, gender, height, weight and physical activity levels. For example, a 3-year-old boy requires 1 serve of fruit a day, but an 11-year-old boy needs 2 serves of fruit a day.

A 3-year-old girl needs 4 serves of grain (cereal) foods a day, and a 14-year-old girl needs 7 serves a day. Children who are taller, more physically active or in the higher end of their age band (and not overweight or obese) may be able to have additional serves of the Five Food Groups or unsaturated spreads and oils or discretionary choices.

For further information go to www.eatforhealth.gov.au

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**For meal ideas and advice on how to apply the serve sizes go to:**

www.eatforhealth.gov.au

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