



# 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 may be the last thing they want 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.

## Food for health

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods



Food and activity for healthy growth

Prepare and store food safely



Encourage and support breastfeeding



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### 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

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



Australian Government  
Department of Health and Ageing  
National Health and Medical Research Council

A guide to healthy eating

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## 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:



Children and teenagers						
4-7 years	5-7	2	1	2	1/2	1-2
8-11 years	6-9	3	1	2	1	1-2
12-18 years	5-11	4	3	3	1	1-3

## 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
1 cup porridge	1 cup breakfast cereal flakes	or 1/2 cup muesli

Vegetables and legumes (choose a variety)		
Starchy vegetables		
1 med potato/yam	1/2 medium sweet potato	1 medium parsnip
Dark green leafy vegetables		
1/2 cup cabbage, spinach, silverbeet, broccoli, cauliflower or brussels sprouts		
Legumes and other vegetables		
1 cup lettuce or salad vegetables	1/2 cup broad beans, lentils, peas, green beans, zucchini, mushrooms, tomatoes, capsicum, cucumber, sweetcorn, turnips, swede, sprouts, celery, eggplant etc	

Fruit		
1 piece medium sized fruit eg apple, orange, mango, mandarin, banana, pear, etc		
2 pieces of smaller fruit (apricots, kiwi, plum, figs)		About 8 strawberries
About 20 grapes or cherries	1/2 cup fruit juice	1/4 med melon (eg. rockmelon)
Dried fruit (4 dried apricots)	1 1/2 tblspn sultanas	1 cup diced pieces/canned fruit

Milks, yoghurt, cheese & alternatives		
250 ml glass or one cup of milk (can be fresh, longlife or reconstituted milk)		
1/2 cup evaporated milk	40g (2 slices) cheese	250ml (1 cup custard)
200g (1 small carton) of yoghurt, plain or fruit, or, as an alternative try:		
cup of calcium-fortified soy milk	1 cup almonds	1/2 cup pink salmon with bones

Meat, fish, poultry & alternatives		
65-100gm cooked meat/chicken (eg 1/2 cup mince/2 small chops/2 slices roast meat)		
80-120g cooked fish fillet, or, as an alternative try:		
2 small eggs	1/3 cup cooked dried beans, lentils, chick peas, split peas or canned beans	1/3 cup peanuts/almonds

Extras Foods which we can occasionally include for variety. They are generally higher in fat and/or sugar, kilojoules, salt etc		
1 med piece of plain cake/1 bun	3-4 sweet biscuits	Half a chocolate bar
60g jam, honey (1 tablespoon)	30g potato crisps	Slice pizza = 2 extras
1 can soft drink/2 glasses cordial	2 scoops icecream	1 meat pie/pasty = 3 extras
1 tablespoon (20g) butter, margarine, oil		

## 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.

Dieting 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 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.

