



# Menu planning in Early Childhood Education and Care Services





# Introduction

This guide has been developed to help cooks and directors meet the nutritional requirements of children attending Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services. It was adapted from the Cooks in Childcare book developed by the Health Promotion Service at Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District.

The guide has information on the Australian Dietary Guidelines, food quantities, information on allergies and safety and using a menu checklist tool.

There are tips, healthy food ideas and a sample menu to help services make it easier to meet children's nutritional requirements.

## For further information contact:

[KRTNE-ConnectingTheDots@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:KRTNE-ConnectingTheDots@health.nsw.gov.au)

## Acknowledgement of Country

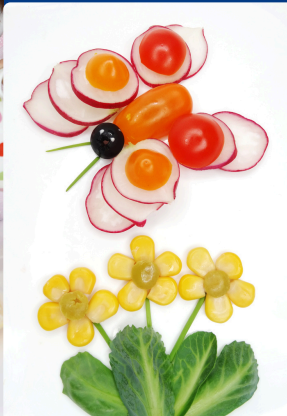
We wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we live and work and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.



**CONNECTING THE DOTS**  
A National Nutrition Service

Provided to you by Karitane and Healthy Beginnings





# Contents

Australian Dietary Guidelines .....	5
Australian Guide to Healthy Eating .....	6
Serves of core food groups .....	7
Ingredient quantities .....	9
Grains and cereals .....	11
Vegetables .....	12
Fruit .....	14
Meat and alternatives .....	15
Iron information .....	16
Menu iron requirements .....	17
Dairy and calcium .....	20
Discretionary foods .....	21
Label reading .....	23
Healthy food swaps .....	24
Healthy snack ideas .....	25
Sample menu .....	26
2-week menu checklist .....	27
2-week sandwich menu checklist .....	29
Choking-risk foods .....	31
Allergies and intolerances .....	35
References and resources .....	37

# Australian Dietary Guidelines

The Australian Dietary Guidelines provide information for healthy eating. These should be followed in early childhood education and care services.



## **Guideline 1:**

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

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## **Guideline 2:**

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from the five food groups every day.

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## **Guideline 3:**

Limit intake of foods containing saturated fat, added salt and added sugars.

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## **Guideline 4:**

Encourage, support and promote breastfeeding.

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## **Guideline 5:**

Care for your food; prepare and store it safely.

# Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating shows the five food groups to be included in menus at early childhood education and care services.



## Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five food groups every day. Drink plenty of water.

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



Vegetables and legumes/beans



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



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



Fruit



Fill the menu with foods from here

Use small amounts



Only sometimes and in small amounts




# Serves of food groups

The table below shows the daily recommended serves of each food group required to meet the nutrient requirements of children aged 1-8 years.



Vegetables and legumes/beans	Serves per day		
	1-2 years	2-3 years	4-8 years
	2-3	2 1/2	4 1/2



Fruit	Serves per day		
	1-2 years	2-3 years	4-8 years
	2-3	2 1/2	4 1/2



Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties	Serves per day		
	1-2 years	2-3 years	4-8 years
	2-3	2 1/2	4 1/2



Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans	Serves per day		
	1-2 years	2-3 years	4-8 years
	2-3	2 1/2	4 1/2



Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives, mostly reduced fat	Serves per day		
	1-2 years	2-3 years	4-8 years
	2-3	2 1/2	4 1/2








# Serves of food groups

Children should be offered at least 50% of their recommended dietary intakes for all nutrients if they are at an early childhood service for at least 8 hours.

The image below shows the range of serves of each food group that is recommended at morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. A range is provided because the nutrient requirements vary for children depending on their age. Each State and Territory may have their own guidelines (see [page 38](#)).

When children are at the service for over 8 hours, additional food should be given such as breakfast or late afternoon tea.

## Food requirements during morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea

 <b>Grains &amp; cereals</b>	 <b>Vegetables</b>	 <b>Fruit</b>	 <b>Dairy &amp; alternatives</b>	 <b>Lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts, seeds &amp; legumes</b>
<b>Number of serves</b> <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">2</div>	<div style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">1-2</div>	<div style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">0.5-1</div>	<div style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">0.75-1</div>	<div style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">0.5-0.75</div>
<b>One serve equals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 slice bread</li> <li>• 30g cereal</li> <li>• 1/2 cup rice</li> <li>• 1/2 cup pasta (cooked)</li> <li>• 3 crispbreads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75g vegetables</li> <li>• 1/2 cup cooked vegetables</li> <li>• 1 cup salad (raw)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 150g fruit</li> <li>• 1 apple, banana</li> <li>• 2 apricots, kiwi or plum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 250 g milk</li> <li>• 200g yoghurt</li> <li>• 40g cheese</li> <li>• 120g ricotta</li> <li>• 1 cup milk alternative (fortified with calcium)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 65g red meat</li> <li>• 75g white meat</li> <li>• 75g fish</li> <li>• 2 eggs</li> <li>• 55g legumes (uncooked)</li> <li>• 170g tofu</li> </ul>



# Ingredient quantities

## GRAINS AND CEREALS

<b>1 serve equals:</b> (2 serves per 8 hours in service)	<b>20 children</b>	<b>30 children</b>	<b>40 children</b>	<b>50 children</b>
1 slice bread	20 slices 1 loaf	30 slices 1½ loaves	40 slices 2 loaves	50 slices 2½ loaves
Pita bread or wrap	20 slices 1 loaf	30 slices 1½ loaves	40 slices 2 loaves	50 slices 2½ loaves
½ medium bread roll	10 rolls	15 rolls	20 rolls	25 rolls
30g (raw) pasta, noodles, rice, couscous	600g	900g	1.2kg	1.5kg
35g crackers or crispbreads	700g	1.05kg	1.4kg	1.75kg
1 English muffin	20	30	40	50
35g flour	700g	1.05kg	1.4kg	1.75kg
30g breakfast cereal	600g	900g	1.2kg	1.5kg

## VEGETABLES

<b>1-2 serves equals:</b>	<b>20 children</b>	<b>30 children</b>	<b>40 children</b>	<b>50 children</b>
75g vegetables: ½ cup cooked, 1 cup salad	1.5 - 3kg	2.25 - 4.5kg	3.0 - 6kg	3.75 - 7.5kg

## FRUIT

<b>0.5 - 1 serve equals:</b>	<b>20 children</b>	<b>30 children</b>	<b>40 children</b>	<b>50 children</b>
75g fresh/frozen fruit	1.5 - 3kg	2.25 - 4.5kg	3 - 6kg	3.75 - 7.5 kg
15g dried fruit	300 - 600g	450 - 900g	600 - 1200g	750 - 1500g



# Ingredient quantities

## MEATS AND NON-MEATS ALTERNATIVES

<b>0.5 - 0.75 serve equals:</b>	<b>20 children</b>	<b>30 children</b>	<b>40 children</b>	<b>50 children</b>
50 - 75g raw red meat, pork or poultry	1 - 1.5kg	1.5 - 2.25kg	2.0 - 3.0kg	2.5 - 3.75kg
58 - 85g raw fish	1.15 - 1.7kg	1.72 - 2.55kg	2.3 - 3.4kg	2.88 - 4.25kg
50 - 75g cooked or canned fish	1 - 1.5kg	1.5 - 2.25kg	2 - 3kg	2.5 - 3.75kg
1 large egg	20 large	30 large	40 large	50 large
37 - 55g dry legumes	0.74 - 1.1kg	1.11 - 1.65kg	1.5 - 2.2kg	1.85 - 2.75kg
75 - 115g canned or cooked legumes	1.5 - 2.3kg	2.25 - 3.45kg	3.0 - 4.6kg	3.75 - 5.75kg
60 - 90g hummus	1.2 - 1.8kg	1.8 - 2.7kg	2.4 - 3.6kg	3 - 4.5kg
85-130g tofu	1.7 - 2.6kg	2.55 - 3.9kg	3.4 - 5.2kg	4.25 - 6.5kg

## DAIRY AND ALTERNATIVES

<b>0.75 - 1 serve equals:</b>	<b>20 children</b>	<b>30 children</b>	<b>40 children</b>	<b>50 children</b>
187 - 250mL milk	3.8 - 5L	5.7 - 7.5L	7.5 - 10L	9.4 - 12.5L
30 - 40g hard cheese	600 - 800g	900 - 1.2kg	1.2 - 1.6kg	1.5 - 2kg
150 - 200g yoghurt	3 - 4kg	4.5 - 6kg	6 - 8kg	7.5 - 10kg
90 - 120g ricotta or cottage cheese	1.8 - 2.4kg	3.2.7 - 6kg	3.6 - 4.8kg	4.5 - 6kg



# Grains and cereals

## Types of cereals and grains

This food group includes bread, cereal, pasta, rice, quinoa, oats, noodles, crackers, rice cakes, couscous, and flour. Include a variety of grains to your menu each week.

### GOAL

- Include a serve of grains with lunch. Extra serves can be added with morning/afternoon tea.
- Choose wholegrain options that are high in fibre and fortified with iron where possible.



## Wholegrains

Wholegrains contain the entire unrefined grain. Choose wholegrains over refined grains. They provide additional fibre and iron, which are an essential part of childcare menus.

### Examples of wholegrains include:

- multigrain and wholemeal bread
- wholemeal pasta
- oats
- quinoa
- buckwheat
- wholegrain crackers
- brown rice.

# Vegetables

## Types of vegetables

Vegetables include lettuce, cucumber, tomato, capsicum, carrot, corn, zucchini, beetroot, cauliflower, broccoli, beans, potato, sweet potato, snow peas, mushrooms and legumes.

Fresh, frozen and canned vegetables are all suitable for use. Use canned varieties with no added salt.

Hard and round vegetables can be a choking hazard and need to be prepared safely. Grate, cut into thin or small pieces cooked or cook to soften.



## Vegetables high in vitamin C

When serving a non-meat meal at lunch, a source of vitamin C must also be included to help increase iron absorption.

Vegetables high in vitamin C include:

- cauliflower
- tomato
- capsicum
- broccoli
- leafy greens.

Try to serve them raw, as heat destroys vitamin C.

# Examples of 1 serve of vegetables

## Vegetables at lunch



75g (1 cup) salad



Stir fry with 75g veg



Salad wrap or sandwich with 75g (1 cup) salad



Soup with 75g veg

## Vegetables at morning or afternoon tea



Platter with 75g vegetable sticks\* per child



Heaped Tbsp of vegetable dip with 45g of vegetable sticks\* and crackers



75g baked beans



Vegetable fritter or muffin



½ medium corn cob

\*Hard vegetable sticks, such as carrots, are a choking hazard. Cut into thin strips or slightly cook to soften.

### GOAL:

- Include 1-2 serves of vegetables per child each day.
- Serve vegetables at lunch and at morning or afternoon tea.
- serve a variety of different coloured vegetables.



# Fruit

## Types of fruit

Fruit is a great way to add a healthy and sweet food to a menu. Examples of fruit include apples, pears, grapes, citrus, berries, watermelon, rockmelon, kiwifruit and banana.

Do not include fruit juice on the menu. Instead use fresh, frozen and canned fruits. Make sure that canned fruits are in juice rather than syrup.

### GOAL:

- Include fruit at morning and afternoon tea each day
- Fruit can be served with lunch as a vitamic C food



## Fruit high in vitamin C

When serving a vegetarian meal at lunch, a source of vitamin C should be included to increase iron absorption.

Fruits high in vitamin C include:

- citrus (orange, lemon, lime)
- strawberry
- rockmelon
- kiwifruit.

## Fruits containing iron

Dried fruit is a source of iron.

However, too much dried fruit can stick to childrens teeth and contribute to tooth decay. Offer children a drink of water with dried fruit and limit the amount provided.

# Meat & alternatives

## Red meat, white meat and non-meat

Meat provides essential nutrients including protein and iron that children need for healthy growth and development.

Red meat includes beef, lamb, and kangaroo.

White meat includes chicken, turkey, pork, fish and seafood.

Non-meat alternatives include egg, tofu, nuts, seeds and legumes. Examples of legumes are lentils, chickpeas, kidney beans, soybeans, and butter beans.



### GOAL:

- Include red meat meals at least 4 times per fortnight
- Include white meat meals at least 4 times per fortnight
- Include non-meat meals at least 1 time per fortnight
- Trim fat from meat and use lean meat options to reduce the amount of saturated fat.



# Iron

## Importance of iron

Iron is an essential mineral to include in a child's diet. Iron is vital for:

- brain development
- making red blood cells to transport oxygen around the body
- preventing fatigue, headaches and lack of sleep, which can occur from iron deficiency.



Red meat sources:  
beef, kangaroo, lamb,  
corned beef

## Haem iron

Haem iron can be found in animal meats. Red meat has the highest amount of iron. Haem iron is more easily absorbed by the body.



Other sources:  
pork, poultry, fish



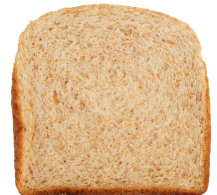
Iron-fortified  
cereal and bread



Legumes

## Non-haem iron

Non-haem iron is present in some plant products and is also added through fortification. Non-haem iron is not as easily absorbed by the body.



Wholemeal pasta, wholemeal  
flour, wholemeal/wholegrain  
bread



Vegetables: cauliflower,  
broccoli, tomatoes,  
capsicum

## Iron and vitamin C

Vitamin C helps the body to absorb non-haem iron. When serving plant protein at lunch, serve a food containing vitamin C at the same meal as a plant protein. These are best served raw, rather than cooked, as heat destroys the vitamin C.



Fruits: citrus, strawberries,  
kiwifruit, dried fruit

# Meeting iron requirements

To help children meet their iron requirements, it is recommended to serve at least one additional iron containing food when red meat is served and at least 2 additional iron containing food when white meat/non-meat are served.

## Red meat meals



0.5-0.75 serves red meat per child



At least **one** other food containing iron in the same day

## White or non-meat meals



0.5-0.75 serves white meat OR fish per child



At least **two** other foods containing iron in the same day

OR



0.5-0.75 serves non-meat protein food (e.g. legumes, tofu and eggs)

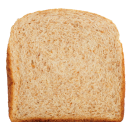


At least **two** other foods containing iron in the same day



Fruits or vegetables high in vitamin C at the same meal

## Examples of other foods containing iron:



Iron-fortified bread & wholemeal bread



Iron-fortified cereal



Beans and legumes



Baked beans



Wholemeal pasta



Hommus



Wholemeal flour



Frittatas

# Red meat meal ideas

## Red meat dishes (beef, lamb, kangaroo)

- Curries
- Casseroles/stews
- Lamb tagine/Moroccan lamb
- Beef chow mein
- Beef ragu
- Corned beef (reduced-salt)
- Mongolian lamb
- Pasta bakes
- Roast (slow-baked in stock for approx 4 hours)
- Soups
- Stir fry
- Stroganoff
- Wraps/sandwiches
- Steak (minute steak baked in the oven for 1.5-2 hours in a small amount of stock - enough to soak)



TIP: add legumes (lentils, beans or chickpeas) to extend meat dishes



## Mince dishes (beef, lamb, kangaroo)

- Chili con carne
- Tacos/nachos/burritos
- Spaghetti Bolognese
- Lasagne
- Meatballs
- Meatloaf
- Rissoles or burgers
- Vegetable and meat strudel
- Beef or lamb pilaf
- Browned mince as a pizza topping
- Koftas
- Moussaka
- Savoury mince
- Shepherd's pie

TIP: Choose lean, heart smart or premium mince

# Vegetarian meal ideas

## High iron and protein meals

- Curries with tofu or legumes
- Tofu stir-fry
- Chickpea casseroles/stews
- Lentil dhal
- Mexican beans
- Lentil & spinach stew
- Soups
- Egg frittata
- Fried rice with tofu and/or egg
- Baked beans and toast
- Lentil Shepards pie
- Lentil/ bean Bolognese
- Falafel wrap
- Minestrone (with kidney beans)



TIP: Serve with a fruit or vegetable high in vitamin C (page 9).

## Dairy protein dishes

- Cheese and vegetable pizza
- Cheese wraps or sandwiches
- Spinach and ricotta caneloni
- Cheesey pasta bake



TIP: Serve additional sources of iron at morning tea and afternoon tea when providing dairy protein dishes

# Dairy and calcium

Calcium is essential for strengthening teeth and bones. Dairy products provide a good source of calcium.

Cow's milk and milk products naturally contain calcium. However, plant-based milks such as soy, almond, oat and rice milk may be low in calcium - check the label to ensure it is calcium fortified. Cow's milk is preferable to plant-based milks.



## GOAL 1:

- Include one serve of dairy each day
- Ideally, split this across multiple meals to help meet requirements.



## Types of dairy

Dairy or dairy alternatives can be included in a menu in several forms.

One serve is equivalent to:

- 250mL milk (e.g. 125mL at morning & afternoon tea)
- 40g cheese with crackers
- 200g yoghurt
- 200g custard
- 1 cup soy milk (fortified with calcium)

Use full-cream dairy products for children under 2 years. Reduced-fat dairy is recommended for children over 2 years.

## GOAL 2:

- Make sure plant-based milks are fortified with at least 100mg calcium per 100mL milk.

# Discretionary foods

Discretionary foods are not core foods in the diet. They are high in kilojoules, salt, added sugars, saturated and trans fat.

It is recommended that discretionary foods including biscuits, cakes, muffins, sausages (allowed once per fortnight), pastries, ice cream, crisps and lollies are not included in ECEC service menus.

## GOAL:

- When preparing foods, use wholemeal flour, minimal sugar, minimal salt and unsaturated fat.

## Sugar

Excess sugar should be avoided at childcare centres. It provides more energy than is necessary. It can also cause tooth decay.

Other names for sugar are molasses, syrup, glucose, treacle, sucrose, maltose, honey, castor sugar, brown sugar, raw sugar, cane sugar, sweetened condensed milk, mannitol, sorbitol and fructose.



## GOAL:

- Read food labels to choose foods without added sugar
- Avoid recipes with added sugar when cooking.



## Salt

Salt should be avoided in large amounts.

Other names for salt include sodium, sodium bicarbonate, baking powder, garlic salt, MSG, sea salt, baking soda, celery salt, vegetable salt, rock salt, sodium nitrate, sodium lactate, monosodium glutamate and Na.

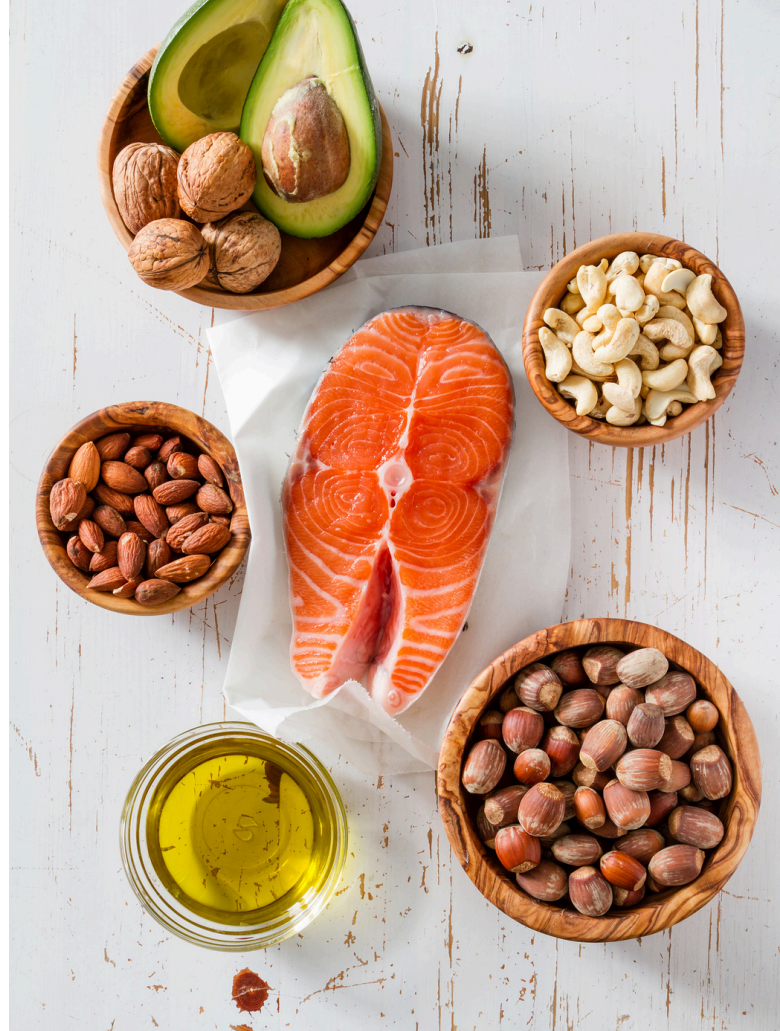
## GOAL:

- Choose foods/recipes low in salt
- Opt for products that are reduced-salt or no added salt.

# Fats

There are different types of fats:

- **Saturated fats and trans fats**  
These are unhealthy fats and should not be used.
- **Unsaturated fats**  
These healthy fats should be included in the diet in small amounts.



## GOAL:

- Replace saturated fats and trans fats with unsaturated fats for childcare centre menus.
- When buying products, aim for less than 3g saturated fat per 100g of product.

### Saturated (unhealthy) fats

### Unsaturated (healthy) fats

	Saturated (unhealthy) fats	Unsaturated (healthy) fats
<b>Meats</b>	fat from meat & chicken skin (purchase lean meats & remove fat & skin from meat)	fish
<b>Spreads</b>	butter, lard	canola margarine, olive oil margarine, sunflower-based margarine
<b>Oils</b>	coconut oil, palm oil (can be labelled vegetable oil on food packages)	canola oil, extra virgin olive oil, olive oil, sunflower oil, safflower oil, soybean oil
<b>Other foods</b>	sour cream, deep fried foods, crisps, pastry, cakes, cream, sausage rolls, meat pies	avocado, seeds, nuts,

# How to understand food labels

Food labels and marketing claims can persuade us to purchase a product or makes us think it is healthy. To help you select the most nutritious product, check the ingredients list and nutrition information panel of similar products.

The nutrition information panel will show you how much energy, protein, fat (total and saturated), carbohydrates, sugar, fibre and sodium (salt) the product contains. It will have two columns: quantity per serving size and quantity per 100g. Use the 100g column to compare products and make better nutrition choices.

<b>NUTRITION INFORMATION</b>		
Servings per package: 9.00		
Serving Size: 25.00g		
	Quantity Per Serving	Quantity Per 100g
Energy	488kJ	1,950kJ
Protein	1.90g	7.60g
Fat, total	4.6g	18.30g
- Saturated	1.0g	4.10g
Carbohydrates	16.5g	66.00g
- Sugars	1.5g	6.00g
Dietary Fibre	0.8g	3.20g
Sodium	123mg	490.00mg

**Saturated fat**  
Aim for less than 3g per 100g. Other names for ingredients high in saturated fat: Animal fat/oil, butter, chocolate, milk solids, coconut, coconut oil/milk/cream, copha, cream, ghee, dripping, lard, suet, palm oil, sour cream, vegetable shortening.

**Sugar**  
Avoid larger amounts of added sugars. Aim for less than 15g per 100g.

**Fibre**  
Not all labels include fibre. Choose breads and cereals with 3g or more per serve

**Sodium (Salt)**  
Choose lower sodium options among similar foods. Food with less than 400mg per 100g are good, and less than 120mg per 100g is best.

<b>LABEL READING CARD</b>	
Compare numbers in the per 100g column	
<b>Total fat</b>	Less than 10g
<b>Saturated fat</b>	Less than 3g
<b>Sugar</b>	Less than 15g
<b>Sodium (salt)</b>	Less than 400mg
<b>Fibre*</b>	3g or more <u>per serve</u>
*Breads, cereals and grain foods	

# Healthy food swaps

## Discretionary food

## Healthy swap

Sausage roll wrapped in pastry



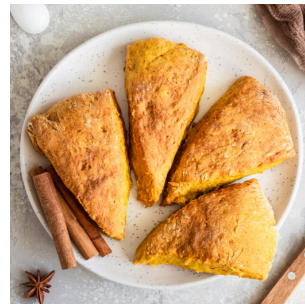
Sausage roll wrapped in wholemeal bread or filo pastry

Ice cream



Yoghurt sundae topped with fruit & muesli

Pastries, muffins, biscuits & cakes



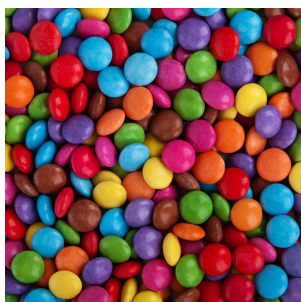
Vegetable or fruit muffins, or vegetable scones (with wholemeal flour, using minimal sugar & unsaturated fat)

Deep fried foods



Oven-baked potato or vegetables

Lollies, chocolate & other discretionary foods



Fruit & vegetable platter with dip or yoghurt

# Healthy snack ideas



## Vegetables

- Vegetable sticks
- Vegetable dip (hommus, beetroot dip, salsa, guacamole)
- Corn cobs
- Baked beans
- Mini quiches with vegetables
- Mini pizzas or scrolls with vegetables
- Vegetable muffins/scones
- Corn or zucchini slice
- Oven-baked vegetables
- Sushi filled with vegetables
- Vegetable fritters
- Falafels



## Wholegrains (iron-rich):

- Iron-fortified cereal
- Sandwich on wholemeal bread
- Pikelets (made with wholemeal flour)
- Wholegrain rice crackers
- Wholemeal toast with Vegemite
- Scones (made with wholemeal flour)
- Wholegrain bagels
- Wholemeal raisin toast
- Pinwheel wholegrain wraps
- Wholemeal English muffins
- Wholemeal rice cakes topped with veg
- Scrolls (made with wholemeal flour)

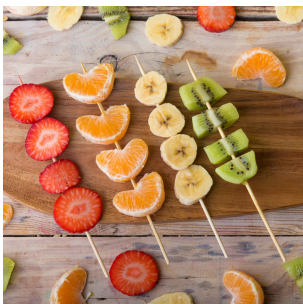


# Healthy snack ideas



## Dairy:

- Homemade frozen yoghurt sticks with fruit
- Yoghurt with fruit & muesli
- Cheese with wholemeal crackers
- Cheese on wholemeal toast
- Creamy rice pudding
- Smoothie
- Plain milk
- Yoghurt
- Custard



## Fruit:

- Fresh, cut-up fruit
- Canned fruit (in juice not syrup)
- Fruit kebabs (on popsicle sticks)
- Fruit sticks with yoghurt dip
- Fruit salad
- Frozen fruit pieces
- Trail mix with dried fruit



## Meats and non-meats:

- Mini meatballs
- Mini quiches
- Egg slice
- Wholemeal jaffles with baked beans
- Mince rolls made with mountain bread
- Mini falafel balls



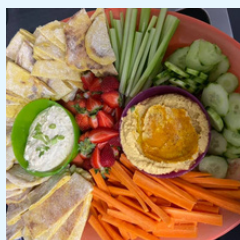
# Sample menu - week 1



Water available  
at all times

This 2-week sample menu is an example of a menu which meets the Menu Planning Checklist.

## Morning tea



Vegetable  
platter + dip  
& cheese



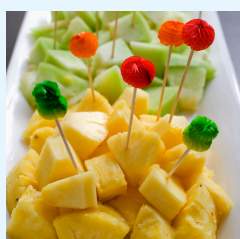
Fruit platter  
+ cheese &  
wholemeal  
crackers



Vegetable  
scones on  
wholemeal  
flour



Fruit  
smoothies



Fruit &  
yoghurt  
dip  
platter

## Lunch



Beef & veg  
lasagne +  
wholemeal  
pasta sheets



Chicken &  
veg curry +  
brown rice



Tuna bake  
+  
vegetables  
&  
wholemeal  
pasta

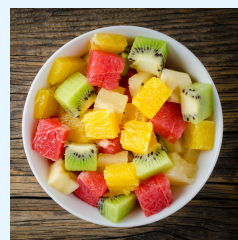


Baked  
beans on  
wholemeal  
toast &  
oranges



Beef & veg  
stir fry +  
wholemeal  
noodles

## Afternoon tea



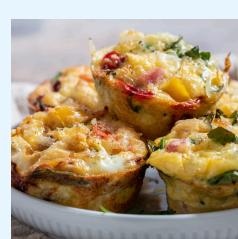
Fruit salad  
& milk



Dip,  
veg sticks,  
pita bread  
& milk



Iron-  
fortified  
cereal +  
berries &  
milk



Vegetable  
muffins +  
wholemeal  
flour & milk



Vegetable  
pikelets +  
wholemeal  
flour &  
milk



# Sample menu - week 2



Water available  
at all times

## Morning Tea



Vegetable  
platter with  
dip & cheese



Corn thins,  
cottage  
cheese &  
fruit



Wholemeal  
pita bread,  
hummus and  
veg sticks



Brown rice  
cakes + dip  
and  
vegetables



Wholegrain  
crackers,  
cheese, veg  
slices

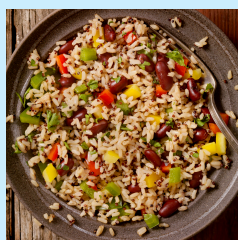
## Lunch



Roast beef  
& salad  
wholegrain  
wraps &  
apple slices



Salmon fish  
cakes +  
salad



Mexican  
bean salad +  
cheese,  
brown rice &  
orange slices



Assorted  
sandwiches  
on  
wholemeal  
bread &  
fruit



Lamb & veg  
curry on  
brown rice

## Afternoon tea



Fruit  
salad &  
yoghurt  
& milk



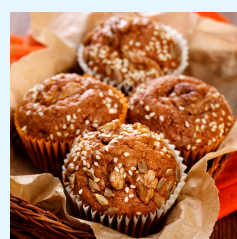
Hommus  
+  
vegetable  
sticks &  
milk



Wheat  
biscuits &  
milk  
topped  
with fruit



Fruit &  
yoghurt  
dip platter





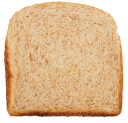



Veg  
muffins +  
wholemeal  
flour & milk


# 2-week menu checklist

## How to use this checklist:

- Complete steps 1 - 9 when planning or reviewing a menu.
- Use the circles to tick each day the requirement is met.
- Use the diamond column on the right to check if the requirement has been met over the 2 weeks.
- This checklist is based on the number of meals and serves recommended to meet the nutritional needs of children (aged 1-5 years) who spend 8 hours or more in care.
- Extra meals and/or mid meals should be provided for children in care longer than 8 hours (e.g. breakfast and/or afternoon tea).

Step 1: Main menu requirements			Week 1					Week 2					2-week check
			M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	
	One main meal	Daily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	One morning tea	Daily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	One afternoon tea	Daily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Step 2: Meats, non-meats and iron			Week 1					Week 2					2-week check	
			M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F		
<b>Red meat</b>														
	0.5-0.75 serves red meat per child	+	At least 4 times per fortnight	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1 other iron food		Same days as red meat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e.g. high fibre wholemeal bread, bread with added fibre, dried fruit, iron fortified cereal, hummus, beans														
<b>White meat and non-meat protein foods</b>														
	0.5-0.75 serves white meat or non-meat protein per child	+	Up to 6 times per fortnight	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
all weights are raw meat, non-meat meals should be based on egg, legumes, tofu or cheese														
	2 other iron foods	+	Same days as white meat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
See above for examples														
	Raw vegetables or fruit high in vitamin C	+	With non-meat meals*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e.g. citrus, tomato, capsicum, rockmelon, cauliflower, kiwifruit, *Vitamin C helps with iron absorption from non-meat meals														

Step 3: Vegetables			Week 1					Week 2					2-week check
			M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	
	At least 1 serve per child	Daily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Offer at lunch and at least one mid-meal	Daily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Step 4: Fruit

### Week 1

M T W T F

### Week 2

M T W T F

2-week  
check



0.5 - 1 serve of fruit

Daily

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

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examples of 1 serve: 150g, 1 medium piece, 2 small pieces, 1 cup canned fruit

## Step 5: Dairy and alternatives

### Week 1

M T W T F

### Week 2

M T W T F

2-week  
check



0.75 - 1 serve of dairy

Daily

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○ ○ ○ ○ ○

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e.g. 1 cup milk, 200g yoghurt, 40g cheese, 120g ricotta cheese, 250mL fortified soy milk If using an alternative e.g. soy products, ensure it contains 100mg of calcium per 100g

## Step 6: Grains

### Week 1

M T W T F

### Week 2

M T W T F

2-week  
check



2 serves of bread, cereal, rice or pasta

Daily

○ ○ ○ ○ ○  
○ ○ ○ ○ ○

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○ ○ ○ ○ ○

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◇

examples of 1 serve: 1 slice bread, ½ cup rice or pasta



High fibre varieties included

Daily

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○ ○ ○ ○ ○

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e.g. wholegrain, wholemeal, high-fibre white

## Step 7: Water

### Week 1

M T W T F

### Week 2

M T W T F

2-week  
check



Water as a beverage

Daily

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

◇

## Step 8: Discretionary

### Week 1

M T W T F

### Week 2

M T W T F

2-week  
check



Discretionary items not included

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

◇

e.g. cakes, muffins, pastries, deep fried foods, sausages

Note: homemade goods with minimal sugar, wholemeal flour, unsaturated fat are recommended to be limited to 1-2 times per week. Sausages can only be included once a fortnight.

## Step 9: Variety



The menu provides variety

- Different types and colours of vegetables and fruits
- Main meals not repeated over the fortnight


◇  
◇

# 2-week sandwich menu checklist






Use this checklist if you are planning a sandwich menu.

Refer to more detailed instructions located on the 2-week Menu Checklist.


## Step 1: Main menu requirements

			Week 1					Week 2					2-week check
			M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	
	One main meal	Daily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	One morning tea	Daily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	One afternoon tea	Daily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>


## Step 2: Sandwich fillings

			Week 1					Week 2					2-week check
			M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	
	Animal protein E.g. beef, lamb, pork, chicken, tuna, salmon	Daily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Vegetarian protein e.g. baked beans, hummus, falafel, egg, cheese	Daily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	At least 45g protein is served per child	Daily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Vegetables Served in sandwich filling or on the side e.g. tomato, capsicum,	Daily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Raw vegetables or fruits, high in vitamin C Served in sandwich filling or on the side e.g. citrus, tomato, capsicum, rockmelon, cauliflower, kiwifruit, broccoli	Daily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Step 3: Sandwich bread

			Week 1					Week 2					2-week check
			M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	
	Use bread with added iron, such as wholemeal	Daily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2 slices of bread per child	Daily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Step 4: Fruit

			Week 1					Week 2					2-week check
			M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	
	1 serve of fruit examples of 1 serve: 150g, 1 medium piece, 2 small pieces, 1 cup canned fruit	Daily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Step 5: Vegetables

**Week 1**

M T W T F

**Week 2**

M T W T F

**2-week check**



### 1-2 serves of vegetables

examples of 1 serve: 75g, ½ cup cooked vegetables, 1 cup salad, ½ cup beans or lentils, ½ medium potato

Daily

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

◇

## Step 6: Dairy and alternatives

**Week 1**

M T W T F

**Week 2**

M T W T F

**2-week check**



### 1 serve of dairy

e.g. 1 cup milk, 200g yoghurt, 40g cheese, 120g ricotta cheese, 250mL fortified soy milk. If using an alternative e.g. soy products, ensure it contains 100mg of calcium per 100g

Daily

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○  
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○  
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○  
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○  
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

◇  
◇  
◇

## Step 7: Other foods containing iron

**Week 1**

M T W T F

**Week 2**

M T W T F

**2-week check**



### At least 2 foods containing iron in addition to sandwiches

e.g. high-fibre wholemeal bread, bread with added fibre, wholemeal crackers, dried fruit, iron-fortified cereal, hommus, beans, red meat

Daily

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○  
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○  
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

◇  
◇

## Step 8: Water

**Week 1**

M T W T F

**Week 2**

M T W T F

**2-week check**



### Water as a beverage

Daily

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

◇

## Step 8: Discretionary

**Week 1**

M T W T F

**Week 2**

M T W T F

**2-week check**



### Discretionary items not included

e.g. cakes, muffins, pastries, deep-fried foods, sausages  
Note: homemade goods with minimal sugar, wholemeal flour, unsaturated fat are recommended to be limited to 1-2 times per week.  
Sausages can only be included once a fortnight.

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

◇

## Step 10: Variety



### The menu provides variety

(e.g. different types and colours of vegetables, main meals not repeated) over the fortnight.

◇

# Choking risk foods

These foods pose a high risk of choking for children under 4 years. Avoid or modify to reduce risk. Children should be actively supervised when eating or drinking at all times.



Small, hard foods  
e.g. nuts, seeds, raw peas



Foods that are sharp  
when broken e.g. pretzels



Popcorn



Round, slippery foods  
e.g. grapes, cooked  
peas, cherry tomatoes  
- slice or mash  
instead



Hard pieces of raw  
fruit or vegetables e.g.  
apples and carrots -  
cook, grate or slice  
thin



Bones, skin and fat in  
meat and fish -  
remove before  
serving



Sausage skin -  
remove if tough



Meat must be tender  
bite-size pieces



Other chewy foods e.g.  
marshmallows, lollies



# Making foods safe for babies and toddlers

## Nuts

Mix nut butter in food or spread on toast or crackers



## Grapes and tomatoes

Cut into 4 pieces length ways



## Fish

Remove all bones and break into small pieces



## Peas and corn

Mash with fork or blend



## Meat

Give tender shredded meat or cut into small bite-size pieces



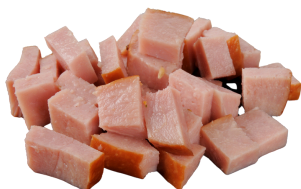
## Hard fruit and vegetables

Cook until soft, grate or thinly slice



## Sausages

Remove skin and cut into small pieces. Serve after 1 years.



## Lollies, chips and popcorn

Do not give to babies < 1years. Limit after 1 years.



# Allergies and intolerances

## Food allergies

A food allergy is an immune response to a type of protein in foods such as peanuts, nuts, milk, shellfish, egg, wheat and soy. Symptoms of an allergic reaction include difficulty breathing, swelling, welts, collapse and anaphylaxis.



If a child has an allergy, the food causing the reaction must be completely avoided for the child.

There must also be an educator who has completed anaphylaxis training present at all times.



Discuss a child's sensitivity with the parents to determine what foods to avoid. If a child is on a very restrictive diet, seek advice from an experienced dietitian to provide suitable food for the child.



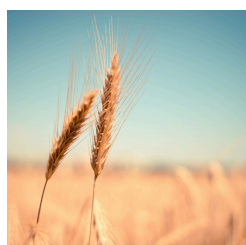
## Food intolerances

A food intolerance is a reaction to a specific chemical in a food. They range in sensitivity. Examples include dairy, gluten, amines, salicylates and FODMAPs.



## Special diets

A range of medical conditions can require a child to follow a specific diet, such as diabetes, coeliac disease, cystic fibrosis and failure to thrive.



Request advice from the parents regarding doctor or dietitian advice regarding their child's allergies and special dietary requirements.



# Tips for allergies and intolerances

1. Check if the child has any allergies, intolerances or special diets when enrolled.

---

2. Complete the ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis for all children at risk of anaphylaxis:  
<https://www.allergy.org.au/hp/anaphylaxis/ascia-action-plan-for-anaphylaxis>

---

3. Ask parents who have children with intolerances or allergies for an individual management plan, including a letter from their doctor.

---

4. Ensure that all foods that the child is allergic or intolerant to are avoided. This includes foods that list 'may contain traces of' on their labels.

---

5. Ensure staff are trained to follow correct procedures for allergens in the kitchen and to correctly read labels.

---

6. Take care to avoid cross contamination of foods in the kitchen when preparing allergen friendly food for the child, or choose to completely eliminate those foods from the menu.

---

7. Check with the family every 6-12 months to update any information on the allergy, intolerance or diet.

---

8. Have instructions accessible (such as in the kitchen) for all staff members on each child and how to manage their allergy, intolerance or special diet.

---

9. Ensure that craft activities do not use any contaminated products such as nuts, egg crates or milk cartons.

# References

Information has been included and/or adapted from the following sources:

- National Health and Medical Research Council 2013, Australian Dietary Guidelines, <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines/australian-dietary-guidelines-1-5>.
- National Health and Medical Research Council 2013, 'Australian Guide to Healthy Eating', <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines/australian-guide-healthy-eating>.
- Label reading guidelines [https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/eatingwell/efh\\_food\\_label\\_example\\_130621.pdf](https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/eatingwell/efh_food_label_example_130621.pdf)
- Allergy action plan: [www.allergy.org.au/healthprofessionals/anaphylaxis-resources/ascia-action-plan-for-anaphylaxis](http://www.allergy.org.au/healthprofessionals/anaphylaxis-resources/ascia-action-plan-for-anaphylaxis)

## Further information:

- <https://karitane.com.au/professional-development>
- Allergy Aware resources: <https://www.allergyaware.org.au/childrens-education-and-care>
- Get Up and Grow Guidelines <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/get-up-grow-resource-collection>



# State-based resources and guidelines

- **Australian Capital Territory**  
<https://actnss.org/resources/childcare-menu-planning-tool/>
- **New South Wales**  
[www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au/munch-move-resources/](http://www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au/munch-move-resources/)
- **Northern Territory**  
<https://health.nt.gov.au/professionals/nutrition-and-physical-activity>
- **Queensland**  
<https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/regulation/health-and-safety/food-and-dietary-guidelines>
- **South Australia**  
<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/healthy+living/healthy+communities/early+childhood+settings>
- **Tasmania**  
[https://www.movewelleatwell.tas.gov.au/early\\_childhood\\_services](https://www.movewelleatwell.tas.gov.au/early_childhood_services)
- **Victoria**  
<https://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/menu-planning/long-day-care>
- **Western Australia**  
<https://snacwa.com.au/>





## **CONNECTING THE DOTS**

A National Nutrition Service

Provided to you by Karitane and Healthy Beginnings

[www.karitane.com](http://www.karitane.com)

[www.healthybeginnings.org.au](http://www.healthybeginnings.org.au)

