

# THE AUSTRALIAN GUIDE TO HEALTHY EATING

Information for teachers, students and families



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

[www.eatforhealth.gov.au](http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au)

## Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

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



Use small amounts



Only sometimes and in small amounts



# GRAIN FOODS



Grain foods comprise grains that can be cooked and eaten whole, ground into flour to make cereal foods, or made into breakfast cereals.

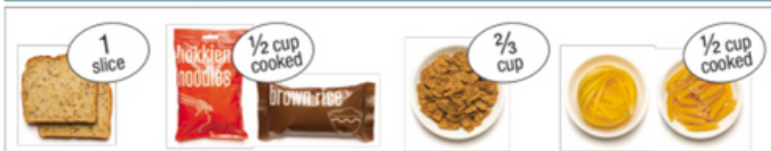
- **Breads:** wholemeal, wholegrain, white, rye, pita, focaccia, crispbreads.
- **Breakfast cereals:** high fibre (wholegrain) oats, porridge, muesli, wholewheat biscuits, ready to eat (such as cornflakes, cheerios).
- **Grains:** rice, barley, corn, polenta, buckwheat, spelt, millet.
- **Other products:** pasta, noodles, English muffin, crumpet, rice cakes, couscous, popcorn, flour.

At least two thirds of grain foods eaten should be wholegrain.

## What is a serve of grain\* (cereal) food?

A standard serve is (500kJ) or:

1 slice (40g)	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 (120g)	cooked porridge
⅔ cup (30g)	wheat cereal flakes
¼ cup (30g)	muesli
3 (35g)	crispbreads
1 (60g)	crumpet
1 small (35g)	English muffin or scone



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

## Important nutrients in grain foods:

- Fibre.
- Protein.
- Wide range of vitamins and minerals including the B vitamins, folate, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, iron, vitamin E, zinc, magnesium and phosphorus.
- Carbohydrate, which provides energy/ fuel for the body.
- Wholegrain cereals provide complex carbohydrate for sustained (long-term) energy.

## Why grain foods are important:

- Fibre helps us stay fuller for longer, which can help with concentration.
- Fibre is especially useful in keeping the digestive track healthy and can assist with constipation.
- The complex carbohydrates in grain foods are slowly digested, which provides energy over time and helps prevent overeating.
- Grain foods can reduce the risk of developing certain diseases including coronary heart disease, colon cancer, diabetes and diverticular disease.

The recommendation is for 'mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties'. Wholegrain cereals contain more nutrients than refined cereal foods (e.g. white bread), because many of the important nutrients occur in the outer layer of the grain which is lost during processing.

## How much we should be eating each day:

Serves per day

	2-3 years	4-8 years	9-11 years	12-13 years	14-18 years
Boys	4	4	5	6	7
Girls	4	4	4	5	7

Serves per day

	19-50 years	51-70 years	70+ years
Men	6	6	4½
Women	6	4	3





# VEGETABLES AND LEGUMES/ BEANS



## Types of foods:

- **Dark green and cruciferous:** broccoli, brussels sprouts, bok choy, cabbages, cauliflower, lettuce, spinach, snow peas.
- **Root/ tubular/ bulb:** potato, sweet potato, carrots, beetroot, onion, shallots, garlic, swede, turnip.
- **Legumes/ beans:** kidney beans, soybeans, lima beans, cannellini beans, chickpeas, lentils, split peas, tofu.
- **Other:** tomato, celery, zucchini, avocado, capsicum, eggplant, mushrooms, cucumber, pumpkin, green peas, green beans.

## What is a serve of vegetables\*?

A standard serve 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
- ½ cup sweet corn
- ½ medium potato or other starchy vegetables (sweet potato, taro or cassava)
- 1 medium tomato



\*With canned varieties, choose those with no added salt

## Important nutrients in vegetables:

- Fibre.
- Vitamins and minerals, especially magnesium, vitamin C and folate.
- Some vegetables are higher in carbohydrate than others, for example carrots, corn, and potatoes (which provide energy/ fuel for the body).
- Vegetables are 'nutrient dense', meaning they are low in kilojoules (energy), yet high in vitamins and minerals.

## Why vegetables are important:

- Fibre helps us stay fuller for longer, which can help with concentration.
- Fibre is especially useful in keeping the digestive track healthy and can assist with constipation.
- Carbohydrate, which is higher in certain vegetables than others, provides the best source of energy for the brain.
- Vitamin C helps keep the immune system health and helps to heal wounds.
- Most vegetables are associated with a reduced risk of different cancers.
- Vegetables can help prevent cardiovascular disease.

Different vegetables can help protect our bodies in different ways, so it's important to choose a variety, including different colours, each day.

## How much we should be eating each day:

Serves per day

	2–3 years	4–8 years	9–11 years	12–13 years	14–18 years
Boys	2½	4½	5	5½	5½
Girls	2½	4½	5	5	5

Serves per day

	19–50 years	51–70 years	70+ years
Men	6	5½	5
Women	5	5	5



# FRUIT



## Types of foods:

- **Pome fruit:** apple, pear.
- **Citrus fruit:** orange, mandarin, grapefruit.
- **Stone fruit:** apricot, cherry, peach, nectarine, plum.
- **Tropical:** banana, paw paw, mangoes, pineapple and melon.
- **Berries:** strawberry, blueberry, raspberry, blackberry.
- **Other:** grapes, passionfruit.

Whole or chopped fruit is the best choice. Choose dried fruit or fruit juice only occasionally.

## What is a serve of fruit?

A standard serve is about 150g (350kJ) or:

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

Or only occasionally:

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



## Important nutrients in fruit:

- Fibre.
- Vitamins and minerals, especially vitamin C, vitamin E, vitamin A (orange, red and yellow fruit), potassium and magnesium.
- Carbohydrate, which provides energy/ fuel for the body.
- Fruit is 'nutrient dense', meaning it is low in kilojoules (energy), yet high in vitamins and minerals.

## Why fruit is important:

- Fibre helps us stay fuller for longer, which can help with concentration.
- Fibre is especially useful in keeping the digestive track healthy and can assist with constipation.
- Carbohydrate provides the best source of energy for the brain.
- Vitamin C and vitamin A helps keep the immune system healthy. Vitamin C helps to heal wounds.
- Fruit is associated with a reduced risk of different cancers.
- Fruit can help prevent cardiovascular disease.

Different fruits can help protect our bodies in different ways, so it's important to choose a variety, including different colours, each day.

## How much we should be eating each day:

### Serves per day

	2-3 years	4-8 years	9-11 years	12-13 years	14-18 years
Boys	1	1½	2	2	2
Girls	1	1½	2	2	2

### Serves per day

	19-50 years	51-70 years	70+ years
Men	2	2	2
Women	2	2	2



# DAIRY AND ALTERNATIVES



## Types of foods:

- **Milks:** all reduced fat or full cream milks, plain and flavoured, long life milks, powdered milk, evaporated milk, soy beverages (**fortified with at least 100mg calcium/100mL**).
- **Yoghurt:** all yoghurts including reduced fat or full cream, plain and flavoured, soy yoghurt (**calcium fortified**).
- **Cheese:** all hard cheeses, reduced or full fat for example cheddar, red Leicester, Gloucester, Edam, Gouda Soy cheeses (**calcium fortified**).

## How much is a serve of milk\*, yoghurt\*, cheese\* and/or alternatives?

A standard serve is (500–600kJ):

- 1 cup (250ml) fresh, UHT long life, reconstituted powdered milk or buttermilk
- ½ cup (120ml) evaporated milk
- 2 slices (40g) or 4 x 3 x 2cm cube (40g) of hard cheese, such as cheddar
- ½ cup (120g) ricotta cheese
- ¾ cup (200g) yoghurt
- 1 cup (250ml) soy, rice or other cereal drink with at least 100mg of added calcium per 100ml



The following foods contain about the same amount of calcium as a serve of milk, yoghurt or cheese:

- 100g almonds with skin
- 60g sardines, canned in water
- ½ cup (100g) canned pink salmon with bones
- 100g firm tofu (check the label as calcium levels vary)

\*Choose mostly reduced fat

## Important nutrients in dairy and alternative foods:

- Protein.
- Calcium (ensure non-dairy alternatives are fortified with calcium).
- Vitamins A, D, B12, riboflavin.
- Minerals iodine and zinc.

Many of the alternative milks, with the exception of soy milk products, may not be a good source of protein and other key nutrients found in milk and products made from milk.

## Why dairy and alternative foods are important:

- Proteins are made up of chemical 'building blocks' called amino acids. Your body uses amino acids to build and repair muscles and bones and to make hormones and enzymes.
- Calcium helps ensure strong bones and teeth; regulates muscle functioning, such as contraction and relaxation; regulates heart functioning and assists with blood clotting.
- Iodine is needed to make essential thyroid hormones. These are used by the body for growth and energy use, as well as brain and bone development in the early years.
- Vitamin B12 is essential for the production of red blood cells, which are needed to carry oxygen from the lungs to the body's tissues and organs.

Reduced fat varieties of milks are not suitable as a milk drink for children under 2 years because of their high energy needs. For nearly everyone else, this is the best choice.

## How much we should be eating each day:

### Serves per day

	2–3 years	4–8 years	9–11 years	12–13 years	14–18 years
Boys	1½	2	2½	3½	3½
Girls	1½	1½	3	3½	3½

### Serves per day

	19–50 years	51–70 years	70+ years
Men	2½	2½	3½
Women	2½	4	4



# MEAT AND ALTERNATIVES



## Types of foods:

- **Lean meats:** beef, lamb, pork, kangaroo, lean and low salt sausages.
- **Poultry:** chicken, turkey, duck, emu, goose.
- **Fish and seafood:** fish, prawns, crab, lobster, mussels, oysters, scallops, clams.
- **Eggs:** chicken eggs, duck eggs.
- **Nuts and seeds:** almonds, pine nuts, walnut, macadamia, hazelnut, cashew, peanut, nut spreads, brazil nuts, seeds.
- **Legumes/beans:** all beans, lentils, chickpeas, split peas, tofu.

## How much is a serve of lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans\*?

A standard serve is (500–600kJ):

65g	cooked lean red meats 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) or one small can of fish
2 large (120g)	eggs
1 cup (150g)	cooked or canned legumes/beans such as lentils, chick peas or split peas
170g	tofu
30g	nuts, seeds, peanut or almond butter or tahini or other nut or seed paste



\*Choose those with no added salt

## Important nutrients in meat and alternative foods:

- Protein. Legumes and beans provide a valuable and cost efficient source of protein, which are important for those consuming vegetarian meals.
- Iodine.
- Iron, particularly lean red meats.
- Zinc.
- Vitamin B12.
- Essential fatty acids.
- The iron and zinc in animal foods is more easily absorbed by the body than in plant foods. Vitamin C assists absorption from plant foods.

## Why meat and alternative foods are important:

- Proteins are made up of chemical 'building blocks' called amino acids. Your body uses amino acids to build and repair muscles and bones and to make hormones and enzymes.
- Iodine is needed to make essential thyroid hormones. These are used by the body for growth and energy use, as well as brain and bone development in the early years.
- Iron is particularly important for transporting oxygen in the blood. This is essential for providing energy for daily life. Iron also helps our immune system fight infection.
- Zinc is important for growth and for the immune system to fight infection.

To ensure adequate iron and zinc, about half the serves from this food group should be lean meats. For those who do not eat animal foods, nuts, seeds, legumes (including tofu) can provide some iron and zinc, plus a good mix of plant-based protein.

## How much we should be eating each day:

		Serves per day				
		2–3 years	4–8 years	9–11 years	12–13 years	14–18 years
Boys		1	1½	2½	2½	2½
Girls		1	1½	2½	2½	2½

		Serves per day		
		19–50 years	51–70 years	70+ years
Men		3	2½	2½
Women		2½	2	2





# 'SOMETIMES' FOODS

## Only sometimes and in small amounts



Some foods and drinks do not fit into the five food groups. These foods are high in saturated fat and/or added sugars, added salt or alcohol and low in fibre. These foods and drinks can also be high in kilojoules (energy).

## Types of foods:

- **Higher added sugars:** Soft drinks, energy drinks, sugar confectionary, jams, some sauces.
- **Higher fat:** Most processed meats (bacon, ham, sausages, frankfurts), crisps, butter, cream, pastry products, meat pies, sausage rolls, potato chips, commercial pizza.
- **Higher added sugars AND higher fat:** Biscuits, cakes, chocolate, doughnuts, ice cream, iced buns, some muesli bars, muffins, sweet pastries.
- **Alcoholic drinks.**

## How much is a serve of 'sometimes' foods

One 'serve' of a discretionary food, is the amount that contains 600kJ. Example serves:

- 2 scoops (75g) regular ice cream
- 50-60g (about two slices) processed meats
- 1 1/2 thick or 2 thinner higher fat/salt sausages
- 2-3 sweet biscuits
- 40g sugar confectionary (about 5-6 small lollies)
- 1/2 small bar (25 g) chocolate
- 1 can (375 mL) soft drink
- 1/3 (60 g) commercial meat pie or sausage roll
- 12 (60 g) fried hot chips.

## How can 'sometimes' foods fit into a healthy diet?

Some people require extra serves of food, for example, those who are taller and more active. It is best if these extra serves come from the five food groups, particularly wholegrain cereals, vegetables including legumes/beans and fruit. However, they can also occasionally include serves of 'sometimes' foods (discretionary foods).

These foods can also contribute to a feeling of enjoyment. They should be consumed sometimes, and in small amounts (such as once a week).

